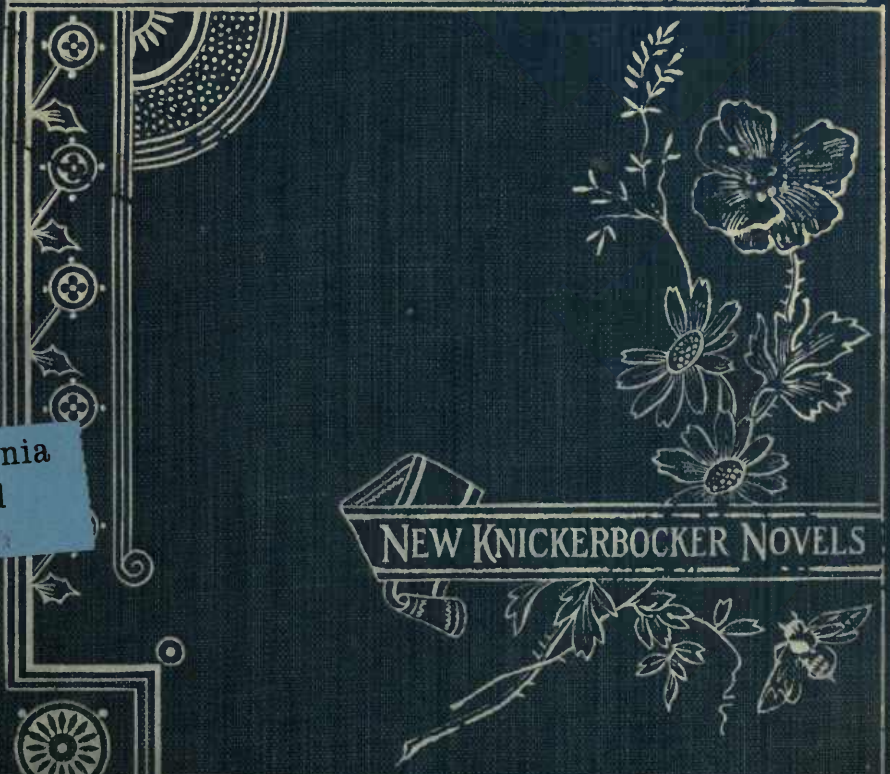
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G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS

NEW YORK & LONDON

AN ARTIST IN CRIME

BY

RODRIGUES OTTOLENGUI

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS

NEW YORK
27 WEST TWENTY-THIRD STREET

LONDON
24 BEDFORD STREET, STRAND

The Knickerbocker Press

1903

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BY
G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS

Entered at Stationers' Hall, London
BY G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS

The Knickerbocker Press, New Rochelle, N. Y.

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AN ARTIST IN CRIME.

CHAPTER I.

A GENTLEMAN THINKS HE CAN COMMIT A CRIME AND ESCAPE DETECTION.

"JACK BARNES never gets left, you bet."

"That was a close call, though," replied the Pullman porter who had given Mr. Barnes a helping hand, in his desperate effort to board the midnight express as it rolled out of Boston. "I would n't advise you to jump on moving trains often."

"Thank you for your good advice, and for your assistance. Here 's a quarter for you. Show me to my section, I am nearly dead, I am so tired."

"Upper ten, right this way, sir. It is all ready for you to turn in."

When Mr. Barnes entered the coach, no one was in sight. If there were other passengers, they were abed. A few minutes later, he himself was patting two little bags of feathers, and placing one atop of the other in a vain attempt to make them serve as one pillow. He had

told the porter that he was tired, and this was so true that he should have fallen asleep quickly. Instead, his brain seemed specially active, and sleep impossible.

Mr. Barnes, Jack Barnes, as he called himself to the porter, was a detective, and counted one of the shrewdest in New York, where he controlled a private agency established by himself. He had just completed what he considered a most satisfactory piece of work. A large robbery had been committed in New York, and suspicion of the strongest nature had pointed in the direction of a young man who had immediately been arrested. For ten days the press of the country had been trying and convicting the suspect, during which time Mr. Barnes had quietly left the Metropolis. Twelve hours before we met him, those who read the papers over their toast had been amazed to learn that the suspect was innocent, and that the real criminal had been apprehended by the keen-witted Jack Barnes. What was better, he had recovered the lost funds, amounting to thirty thousand dollars.

He had had a long chase after his man, whom he had shadowed from city to city and watched day and night, actuated to this course by a slight clue in which he had placed his faith. Now, his man fast in a Boston prison, he was on his way to New York for requisition papers. As he had said, he was tired, yet despite his need of complete rest his thoughts persisted in rehearsing all the intricate details of the reasoning which had at last led him to the solution of the mystery. As he lay in his upper berth awake these words reached his ears :

"If I knew that man Barnes was after me, I should simply surrender."

This promised to be the beginning of an entertaining conversation, and as he could not sleep, Mr. Barnes prepared to listen. Extensive experience as a detective had made him long ago forget the philosophic arguments for and against eavesdropping. The voice which had attracted him was low, but his ears were keen. He located it as coming from the section next ahead of his, number eight. A second voice replied:

"I have no doubt that you would. But I would n't. You overestimate the ability of the modern detective. I should actually enjoy being hounded by one of them. It would be so much pleasure, and I think so easy, to elude him."

The last speaker possessed a voice which was musical, and he articulated distinctly, though he scarcely ventured above a loud whisper. Mr. Barnes cautiously raised his head, arranging his pillows so that his ear would be near the partition. Fortunately, the two men next to him had taken the whole section, and the upper berth had been allowed to remain closed. Mr. Barnes now found that he could readily follow the conversation, which continued thus:

"But see how that Barnes tracked this Pettingill day and night until he had trapped him. Just as the fellow supposed himself safe, he was arrested. You must admit that was clever work."

"Oh, yes, clever enough in its way, but there was nothing specially artistic about it. Not that the detective

was to blame; it was the fault of the criminal. There was no chance for the artistic." Yet Mr. Barnes had used that very adjective to himself in commenting upon his conduct of this case. The man continued: "The crime itself was inartistic. Pettingill bungled, Barnes was shrewd enough to detect the flaw, and with his experience and skill in such cases the end was inevitable."

"It seems to me either that you have not read the full account of the case, or else you do not appreciate the work of the detective. Why, all the clue he had was a button."

"Ah! Only a button—but such a button! That is where I say that the criminal was inartistic. He should not have lost that button."

"It was an accident I suppose, and one against which he could not have guarded. It was one of the exigencies of his crime."

"Exactly so; and it is these little accidents, always unforeseen, though always occurring, which hang so many, and jail so many, and give our detectives such an easy road to fame. That is the gist of the whole matter. It is an unequal game, this between the criminal and the detective."

"I don't catch what you are driving at?"

"I 'll give you a dissertation on crime. Attend! In ordinary business it is brains *versus* brains. The professional man contends with his fellows, and if he would win the race towards fortune he must show more brains. The commercial man competes with other tradesmen all

as clever as himself. So it goes from the lawyer to the locksmith, from the preacher to the sign painter. It is brains rubbing against brains, and we get the most polished thought as the result. Thus the science of honest living progresses."

"What has this to do with the criminal class?"

"One moment. Let the philosopher teach you in his own way. With the criminal it is different. He is matched against his superior. Those in his own class do not contend with him; they are rather his partners, his 'pals,' as they term it. His only contention therefore is with the detective who represents society and the law. No man, I suppose, is a criminal from choice, and it is the criminal's necessity which leads to his detection."

"Then all criminals should be caught."

"All criminals should be caught. That they are not is a strong argument against your detective; for every criminal, we may say is actuated by necessity, and therein lies the possibility of his defeat. For example: You may claim that the expert burglar lays his plans in advance, and that the crime being premeditated he should be able to make such careful pre-arrangements that he could avoid leaving tell-tale marks behind him. This, however, is rarely the case, for this reason: the unexpected often, if not always, happens, and for that he has not prepared. In a moment he sees prison ahead of him, and his fear steals away his caution, so that, as we have seen, he does leave a clue behind him."

"But when you say the unexpected happens, you admit

the possibility for that to occur which could not have been premised, and therefore could not have been guarded against."

"That is true as the case stands. But remove the necessity which actuates our criminal, and make of him simply a scientific man pursuing crime as an art! In the first place, we get an individual who will prepare for more accidents, and secondly, would know how best to meet emergencies which occur during the commission of his crime. For example: if you will pardon the conceit, were I to attempt a crime I should be able to avoid detection."

"I should think that from your inexperience as a criminal you would be run to earth—well, about as quickly as this man Pettingill. This was his first crime you know."

"Would you be willing to make a wager to that effect?" This last remark fairly startled Mr. Barnes, who instantly understood the meaning, which, however, at first escaped the other listener. He waited eagerly for the reply.

"I don't grasp the idea. Make a wager about what?"

"You said that were I to commit a crime I should be captured about as quickly as Pettingill. If you wish, I will wager that I can commit a crime which will be as much talked of as his, and that I will not be captured, or rather I should say convicted. I would not bet against arrest; for, as we have seen in this very case, the innocent are sometimes incarcerated. Therefore I stipulate for conviction."

"Do I understand you to seriously offer to commit a crime merely to decide a wager? You astound me!"

"No more perhaps than Pettingill has surprised his friends. But don't be alarmed; I shall assume all responsibility. Besides, remember it is not crime that is scowled upon in this century, but detection. I wager with you against that. Come, what do you say; shall it be a thousand dollars? I want a little excitement!"

"Well, you shall have it. At least you shall have the excitement of paying the thousand dollars to me; for though I think you are not really intending to become a criminal, in either event I may as well profit by your offer."

"What do you mean by 'in either event'?"

"Why, if you do not commit a crime you pay; and if you do, I am sure that you would be caught. Then, however much I should regret your disgrace, I warn you that I should cut you dead, and take your money."

"Then you accept the wager?"

"I do!"

"Done. Now for the conditions. I am to have one month in which to plan and commit my crime, and one year for avoiding the detectives. That is, if I am free at the end of one year, and can prove to you that I committed a crime within the stipulated period, I win the wager. If I am in jail awaiting trial, the bet cannot be settled until the law has had its way, and I am either proven innocent or guilty. Is that satisfactory?"

"Perfectly. But what class of crime will you commit?"

"My friend you are inquisitive. The wager is on, and my boasted caution must begin. Therefore, I must not tell you anything of the nature of my intended crime!"

"Why, do you suppose for an instant that I would betray you?"

"Well, yes, that idea does occur to me. Listen. As I said before, the necessities of the criminal prove his Nemesis. The necessities involve the object of the crime. That is always a good starting-point in following up a mysterious case. The more unusual the object the better, since it will fit fewer people. Plunder is the commonest and therefore the least promising to trace from. Revenge is common also, but better, because the special revenge connected with the deed must lead to the special individual most likely to execute such revenge. In this instance, I mean my own case, the object of the crime is so unique, that the detective who discovers it should be able to convict me. A crime committed to decide a wager is perhaps new."

"Its very novelty is your best safeguard."

"Yet there are two ways by which it may be discovered, and that is two too many. Had I undertaken this affair secretly there would really have been but a single way for one to learn my secret,—my own confession. As men have been weak enough to do this before now, I should even in that instance have taken precautions. But with my secret in the possession of a second party, the position is more complex."

"I assure you on my honor that I will not betray you. I will agree to forfeit five times the wager in such an event."

"I prefer that you should be perfectly at liberty in the matter. I expect it to be thus: in your own mind at present you do not think that I shall carry out my purpose. Therefore, your friendship for me is undisturbed. Then you count that, if I do commit a crime, it will be some trivial one that you may bring your conscience to excuse, under the circumstances. But let us suppose that a really great crime should be reported, and for some reason you should suspect me. You will hurry to my rooms before I get out of bed, and ask me flatly whether I am guilty. As flatly I should refuse to enlighten you. You would take this as a confession of guilt. You would perhaps argue that if your surmise were correct you would be an accessory before the fact, and to shield yourself and do your duty you would make a clean breast of it."

"I am beginning to be offended, Bob. I did not think you would trust me so little!"

"Don't get angry, old man. Remember that only a few minutes ago you warned me that you would cut me dead after the crime. We artistic criminals must be prepared against every contingency."

"I did not think when I spoke. I did not mean it."

"Yes, you did, and I am not at all angry. Let it be understood then that you will be at liberty to repeat the facts about this wager should your conscience prick you. It will be best for me to expect and be prepared for such

action. But you have not asked what the second danger of discovery is. Can you guess?"

"Not unless you mean as you suggested, your own confession."

"No, though that really makes a third chance. Yet it is so simple. Have you noticed that we can hear a man snoring?"

"No!"

"Listen a moment! Do you not hear that? It is not exactly a snore, but rather a troubled breathing. Now that man is in the third section from us. Do you see the point?"

"I must confess that I would not make a detective."

"Why, my dear boy, if we can hear that fellow, why may not some one in the next compartment be listening to our *tête-à-tête?*" Mr. Barnes fairly glowed with admiration for the fellow's careful consideration of every point.

"Oh, I guess not. Everybody is asleep."

"The common criminal from necessity takes chances like that, without counting on them. I shall not. There is a possibility, however remote, that some one, in Number Ten say, has overheard us. Again he may even be a detective, and worse yet it might be your Mr. Barnes himself."

"Well, I must say if you prepare against such long odds as that you deserve to escape detection!"

"That is just what I will do. But the odds are not so great as you imagine. I read in an afternoon paper that Mr. Barnes had remained in Boston in connection with

properly securing his prisoner during the day, but that he would leave for New York to-night. Of course the newspaper may have been wrong. Then in saying "to-night" it may have been inaccurate; but supposing that the statement were true, then there were three trains upon which he might have started, one at seven o'clock, one at eleven, and this one. One in three is not long odds."

"But even if he is on this train, there are ten coaches."

"Again you are wrong. After his hard work on this Pettingill case he would be sure to take a sleeper. Now if you recall the fact, I did not decide to go to New York to-night till the last minute. Then we found that we could not get a whole section, and were about to bunk together in a lower berth when, several more people applying, they determined to put on another coach. Therefore, unless Mr. Barnes secured his ticket during the day, he would inevitably have been assigned to this coach."

"Had you any special reason for suggesting Number Ten?"

"Yes. I know that Number Six is unoccupied. But just as we started some one came in, and I think took the upper berth of Number Ten."

"Mr. Barnes began to think that he would have exceedingly difficult work to detect this man in crime, were he really to commit one, in spite of the fact that he knew so much in advance. The conversation continued;

"Thus, you see, there are two ways by which my object may become known, a serious matter if unguarded against. As, however, I recognize the possibilities in advance, there will be no difficulty whatever, and the knowledge will be of no value to any detective, even though he be your Mr. Barnes."

"How will you avoid that danger?"

"My dear boy, do you suppose for an instant that I would reply to that, after pointing out that a detective may be listening? However, I will give you an idea. I will show you what I meant when I said that Pettingill had blundered. You said that he had lost only a button, and thought it clever in Barnes to trace him from the button. But a button may be a most important thing. If I should lose one of the buttons of my vest, whilst committing a crime, Mr. Barnes would trace me out in much less than ten days, and for this reason, they are the only ones of the kind in the world."

"How does that happen? I supposed that buttons were made by the thousand?"

"Not all buttons. For reasons which I need not tell the possibly listening detective, a friend travelling abroad had a set made especially, and brought them back to me as a present. They are six handsomely cut cameos, half the set having the profile head of Juliet, and the others a similar face of Romeo."

"A romance?"

"That is immaterial. Suppose that I should plan a robbery in order to decide this wager. As necessity

would not urge me either as to time or place, I should choose my opportunity, let us say when but one person guarded the treasure. That one I should chloroform and also tie. Next, I should help myself to the designated plunder. Suppose that as I were about to depart a sleeping, uncalculated-for pet dog should jump out and bark furiously? I reach for it and it snaps at me, biting my hand. I grapple it by the throat and strangle it, but in its death throes it bites my vest, and a button falls to the ground and rolls away. The dog is at last silenced. Your ordinary burglar by this time would be so unnerved that he would hasten off, not even realizing that he had been bitten, that blood had flowed, or that the button was lost. Mr. Barnes is sent to the house the next day. The lady suspects her coachman, and Mr. Barnes consents to his arrest, not because he thinks him guilty, but because, as the mistress thinks so, he may be, and then more especially, his arrest will lull the fear of the real culprit. Mr. Barnes would observe blood on the ground, on the dog's mouth, and he would find the button. From the button he would find Mr. Thief, with his hand bitten, and there you are."

"But how should you avoid all that?"

"In the first place, were I really wise, I should not have tell-tale buttons about me at such a time. But let us suppose that the time had not been of my own choosing, then the buttons might have been with me. Assured as I should have been that the only person in the house lay chloroformed and tied, I should not have lost my nerve

as did the other individual. Neither should I have allowed myself to be bitten, though if the accident had occurred I should have stopped to wash up the stain from the carpet while fresh, and also from the dog's mouth. I should have discovered the loss of the button, searched for and recovered it, untied the victim, and opened the windows, that the odor of chloroform could pass off during the night. In fact, in the morning the only evidence of crime would have been the strangled dog and the absence of the pelf."

"It is easy enough to explain your actions under supposititious circumstances. But I doubt if in Pettingill's shoes you would have been able to retain your presence of mind, and recover the lost button which led to his final arrest."

"It is possible that you are right, for had I been Pettingill I should have been coerced by necessities as he was. Yet I think I should not have planned such a robbery, choosing my own time as he did, and then have taken with me such a button. But from Mr. Barnes's standpoint, as I said before, very little of the artistic was needed. The button was constructed of a curious old coin. Mr. Barnes went the rounds of the dealers and found the very man who had sold Pettingill the coin. The rest was routine work."

"Well, you are conceited, but I don't mind making a thousand out of your egotism. Now I am sleepy, however, so good-night."

"Good-night, old man. Dream of a way to earn an extra thousand, for I shall win."

For Mr. Barnes himself sleep was now more impossible than ever. He was attracted to this new case, for so he counted it, and was determined to trap the individual who wagered against his acumen. It was a long step towards success to know as much as he had overheard. He would not lose sight of his man during the allotted month. He enjoyed the prospect of allowing him to commit his crime and then quietly taking him in the act. Carefully and noiselessly he dressed himself and slipped out of his berth. Then he crept into one opposite, so that he could have his eye on number eight, and settled down for an all-night vigil.

"It would not surprise me if that keen devil were to commit his crime this very night. I hope so, for otherwise I shall have no sleep till he does."

CHAPTER II.

A DARING AND SUCCESSFUL TRAIN ROBBERY.

THE train was just approaching Stamford, and from the window in the section which he occupied Mr. Barnes was watching the sun glowing red over the hilltops, when he heard approaching him the guard who had assisted him to jump aboard the night before. The man was making mysterious gestures, from which Mr. Barnes understood that he was wanted. He arose and followed the porter to the smoking-room.

"I think you called yourself Barnes," said the man, "as you jumped aboard last night."

"Yes, what of it?"

"Are you Mr. Barnes the detective?"

"Why do you ask?"

"Because, if you are, the conductor wants to see you. There was a big robbery committed on the train during the night."

"The devil!"

"Exactly, but will you come into the next coach?"

"Wait a minute." Mr. Barnes went back into the main part of the coach and tip-toed towards number eight. Gently moving the curtains, he peeped in and looked long and earnestly. He saw two men undoubtedly

sleeping soundly. Satisfied therefore that he could leave his watch for a brief period, he followed the porter into the next coach, where he found the conductor waiting for him in the smoking-room.

"You are Mr. Barnes the detective?" asked the conductor. Mr. Barnes assented.

"Then I wish to place in your hands officially a most mysterious case. We took on a lady last night at Boston, who had a ticket to South Norwalk. As we were approaching that point a short time ago she was notified by the porter. She arose and dressed preparatory to leaving the train. A few minutes later I was hurriedly summoned, when the woman, between hysterical sobs, informed me that she had been robbed."

"Of much?"

"She claims to miss a satchel containing a hundred thousand dollars, in jewelry."

"You have stated that adroitly. She claims to miss! What evidence have you that she has met with any loss at all?"

"Of course we cannot tell about the jewelry, but she did have a satchel, which is now missing. The porter remembers it, and we have searched thoroughly with no success."

"We have stopped at New Haven and at Bridgeport. How many persons have left the train?"

"No one has left the sleepers."

"When you say that no one has left the sleepers, I suppose you mean you saw no one leave?"

"No! I mean just what I said. I have sent the porters through the coaches and they report that all our passengers are in their berths. But here we come to a point. If no one has left the train, then the thief must be aboard?"

"Certainly!"

"The woman when she discovered her loss concluded to remain aboard and go on to New York. All the other passengers, save one, are booked for New York. That one is a man, and he is now dressing, as his destination is Stamford. If he leaves he may take the jewels with him, yet what am I to do?"

"State the facts of the case to him. If he is innocent he will willingly submit to being searched. If, however, he refuses,—well we can be guided by circumstances. Call him in here now."

A few minutes later a foreign and distinctly French-appearing man entered. In speech he disclosed his origin, but the accent was slight. He was of fine appearance, dignified and gentlemanly.

Mr. Barnes sat at the window looking out. The conductor with considerable hesitancy explained the case concluding with:

"You see, my dear sir, this is an awkward business, but we are so sure that the thief is still aboard, that——"

"That you hesitate to allow me to leave the train, eh, Monsieur, is it not so? Yet why should there be any trouble? An honest man must never be hurt in his feelings when he is asked to assist the law, even though for

the moment he is himself a—what you call it—suspect? In this case it is so simple, if only the honest men will make no trouble. They will say to you—'Search me.' You do so, and at last one comes who says, 'You insult me.' That one is of course the thief, eh, Monsieur, do you not agree with me?" He turned towards Mr. Barnes, addressing this last remark to him. The detective looked at him a moment steadily, as was his wont when he meant to remember a face. The Frenchman returned the gaze undisturbed.

"I said almost the same thing to the conductor before you came in," said Mr. Barnes.

"Exactly so. Now then with your permission I will disrobe. Look, if you please, most carefully. My honor is at stake. The more carefully you examine, the less suspicion can attach to me hereafter."

The conductor made a thorough search, emptying every pocket and taking every precaution. He did not expect to find anything, but it was essential that extreme care should be observed. Nothing was found, and the man resumed his clothing.

"Now, if you please, I have with me but two small satchels. If the porter will bring them I will unlock them for you. I have no trunk, as I only went to Boston for a day's trip."

The satchels were brought, examined, and nothing found.

"Now, gentlemen, I suppose I am free, as we are at my station. I shall only remain here a few hours and will

then go on to New York. If you should wish to see me again I shall stop at the Hoffman House. Here is my card. *Au revoir.*"

Mr. Barnes took the card and scrutinized it.

"What do you think?" asked the conductor.

"Think? Oh, you mean of that fellow. You need not worry about him. There is not a shadow of suspicion against him—at present. Besides, should we ever want him, I could find him again. Here is his name—Alphonse Thauret—card genuine too, of French make and style of type. We can dismiss him now and turn our attention to the other passengers. Do you suppose I could have an interview with the woman?"

"You shall have it if you wish. We will not consult her wishes in the matter. The affair is too serious."

"Very well then send her in here and let me have a few words with her alone. Don't tell her that I am a detective. Leave that to me."

A few minutes later a tall woman apparently about forty-five years of age entered. She was not handsome yet had a pleasing face. As she seated herself she looked keenly at Mr. Barnes in a stealthy manner which should have attracted that gentleman's earnest thought. Apparently he did not notice it. The woman spoke first.

"The conductor has sent me in here to see you. What have you to do with the case?"

"Nothing!"

"Nothing? Then why——"

"When I say I have nothing to do with the case, I

mean simply that it rests with you whether I shall undertake to restore to you your diamonds or not. I look after such things for this road, but if the loser does not wish any action taken by the road, why then we drop the matter. Do you wish me to make a search for the stolen property?"

"I certainly wish to recover the jewels, as they are very valuable; but I am not sure that I desire to place the case in the hands of a detective."

"Who said that I am a detective?"

"Are you not one?"

Mr. Barnes hesitated a moment, but quickly decided on his course.

"I am a detective, connected with a private agency. Therefore I can undertake to look up the thief without publicity. That is your main objection to placing the case in my hands is it not?"

"You are shrewd. There are reasons, family reasons, why I do not wish this loss published to the world. If you can undertake to recover the jewels and keep this robbery out of the newspapers I would pay you well."

"I will take the case. Now answer me a few questions. First, your name and address."

"My name is Rose Mitchel, and I am living temporarily in a furnished flat at —— East Thirtieth Street. I have only recently come from New Orleans, my home, and am looking for suitable apartments."

Mr. Barnes took out his note-book and made a memorandum of the address.

"Married or single?"

"Married; but my husband has been dead for several years."

"Now about these jewels. How did it happen that you were travelling with so valuable a lot of jewelry?"

"I have not lost jewelry, but jewels. They are unset stones of rare beauty—diamonds, rubies, pearls, and other precious stones. When my husband died, he left a large fortune; but there were also large debts which swallowed up everything save what was due him from one creditor. This was an Italian nobleman—I need not mention his name—who died almost at the same time as my husband. The executors communicated with me, and our correspondence culminated in my accepting these jewels in payment of the debt. I received them in Boston yesterday, and already I have lost them. It is too cruel, too cruel." She gripped her hands together convulsively, and a few tears coursed down her face. Mr. Barnes mused a few moments and seemed not to be observing her.

"What was the value of these jewels?"

"A hundred thousand dollars."

"By what express company were they sent to you?" The question was a simple one, and Mr. Barnes asked it rather mechanically, though he was wondering if the thief had come across the ocean—from France perhaps. He was therefore astonished at the effect produced. The woman arose suddenly, her whole manner changed. She replied with her lips compressed tightly, as though laboring under some excitement.

"That is not essential. Perhaps I am telling too much to a stranger anyway. Come to my apartment this evening, and I will give you further particulars—if I decide to leave the case in your hands. If not I will pay you for whatever trouble you have in the interim. Good-morning."

Mr. Barnes watched her leave the room without offering to detain her or making any comment on her singular manner. Without rising from his seat he looked out of the window and strummed on the pane. What he thought it would be difficult to tell, but presently he said aloud, though there was no one to hear him :

"I think she is a liar."

Having relieved himself thus, he returned to his own coach. He found two gentlemen in the toilet room allowing themselves to be searched, laughing over the matter as a huge joke. He passed by and entered his own compartment, which the porter had put in order. One after another the few passengers arose, heard of the robbery, and cheerfully passed through the ordeal of being searched.

At last his patience was rewarded by seeing the curtains of number eight moving, and a moment later a fine-looking young man of six-and-twenty emerged, partly dressed, and went towards the toilet. Mr. Barnes sauntered after him, and entered the smoking-room. He had scarcely seated himself before a man entered, who was evidently the other occupant of section eight. Whilst this second man was washing, the conductor explained to the other about the robbery, and suggested that he allow himself to be searched. By this time the conductor was

becoming excited. They were within a few minutes of New York, and all his passengers had been examined save these two. Yet these two looked more aristocratic than any of the others. He was astonished therefore to observe that the young man addressed seemed very much disturbed. He stammered and stuttered, seeking words, and finally in a hoarse voice addressed his companion :

" Bob, do you hear, there 's been a robbery ! "

His friend Bob was bending over the water basin, his head and face covered with a stiff soap lather and his hands rubbing his skin vigorously. Before replying he dipped his head completely under the water, held it so submerged a moment then stood erect with eyes shut and reached for a towel. In a moment he had wiped the suds from his eyes, and looking at his friend he answered most unconcernedly :

" What of it ? "

" But—but—the conductor wants to search me."

" All right. What are you afraid of ? You are not the thief, are you ? "

" No—but——"

" There is no but in it. If you are innocent let them go through you." Then with a light laugh he turned to the glass and began arranging his cravat. His friend looked at him a moment with an expression which no one but Mr. Barnes understood. The detective had recognized by their voices that it was Bob who had made the wager to commit a crime, and it was plain that his friend already suspected him. His fright was occasioned by

the thought that perhaps Bob had stolen the jewels during the night and then secreted them in *his* clothing, where if found the suspicion would not be on Bob. Mr. Barnes was amused as he saw the young man actually searching himself. In a few minutes, with a sigh of intense relief, having evidently discovered nothing foreign in his pockets, he turned to the conductor who stood waiting and expectant.

"Mr. Conductor," he began, "I fear that my conduct has seemed suspicious. I can't explain, but nevertheless I am perfectly willing to have you make a search. Indeed I am anxious that it should be a thorough one." The examination was made and, as with the others, nothing was found.

"Here is my card. I am Arthur Randolph, of the firm J. Q. Randolph & Son, Bankers." Mr. Randolph stood a trifle more erect as he said this, and the poor conductor felt that he had done him a grievous wrong. Mr. Randolph continued: "This is my friend, Robert Leroy Mitchel. I will vouch for him."

At the name Mitchel, Mr. Barnes was a trifle startled. It was the same as that which had been given by the woman who had been robbed. At this point, Mr. Mitchel, a man of forty-five, with a classic face, spoke:

"Thanks, Arthur, I can take care of myself."

The conductor hesitated a moment, and then addressed Mr. Mitchel:

"I regret very much the necessity which compels me to ask you to allow yourself to be searched, but it is my duty."

"My dear sir, I understand perfectly that it is your duty and have no personal feelings against you. Nevertheless, I distinctly refuse."

"You refuse?" The words came from the other three men together. It is difficult to tell which was the most surprised. Randolph turned pale and leaned against the partition for support. Mr. Barnes became slightly excited and said:

"That amounts to a tacit acknowledgment of guilt, since every other man has been searched."

Mr. Mitchel's reply to this was even more of a surprise than what he had said before.

"That alters the case. If every one else has submitted, so will I." Without more ado he divested himself of his clothing. Nothing was found. The satchels of both men were brought, but the search was fruitless. The conductor glanced at the detective helplessly, but that gentleman was looking out of the window. One who knew Mr. Barnes could have told that he was fearfully angry, for he was biting the end of his moustache.

"Here we are at the Grand Central," said Mr. Mitchel. "Are we at liberty to leave the train?" Receiving an acquiescent nod the two friends walked to the other end of the coach. Mr. Barnes abruptly started up and without a word jumped from the train as it slowly rolled into the great depot. He went up to a man quickly, said a few words in an undertone, and both went back towards the train. Presently the woman who had been robbed came along, and as she passed out of the building Mr. Barnes's

companion followed her. He himself was about to depart, when, feeling a light tap upon his shoulder, he turned and faced Mr. Mitchel.

"Mr. Barnes," said the latter, "I want a few words with you. Will you breakfast with me in the restaurant?"

"How did you know that my name is Barnes?"

"I did not know it, though I do now"; and he laughed in a complacent manner which jarred on Mr. Barnes. The detective felt that this man was getting the best of him at every turn. But for all that he was only the more determined to trap him in the end. Accustomed to think quickly, he decided to accept the invitation, considering that he could lose nothing and might gain much by a further acquaintance. The two men therefore went below to the eating-room, and seated themselves at a small table. After giving the waiter a liberal order, Mr. Mitchel began:

"Won't it be best for us to understand one another from the outset, Mr. Barnes?"

"I don't know what you mean."

"I think you do. You asked me a moment ago how I knew your name. As I said, I did not know it, though I suspected it. Shall I tell you why?"

"Certainly, if you wish."

"Perhaps I am a fool to show you your first blunder in this game, since you are evidently enlisted against me; but as I sent my friend off alone, purposely for the chance of doing so, I cannot resist the temptation."

"Stop a moment, Mr. Mitchel. I am not such a fool

as you take me to be. I know what you are going to say."

"Ah, indeed! that is clever."

"You are about to tell me that I made an ass of myself when I spoke in the coach upon your refusing to be searched."

"Well, I should not have put it quite so harshly, but the fact is this: When you deliberately followed Randolph into the toilet-room, I became suspicious, being, as I was, at your heels. When the conductor spoke to me, I refused purposely, to watch the effect upon you, with the result, as you now see, that I had my suspicion confirmed. I knew that you were a detective, and, that point gained, there was no further reason for refusing the conductor."

"As I said, I acted like an ass. But I did not need this warning. It will not occur again, I assure you."

"Of course I see now that you overheard our conversation last night, and such being the case you naturally suspected me of this robbery. But I am wondering, if you did overhear our talk, why you did not watch me all night." To this Mr. Barnes made no reply. "I have one favor to ask."

"What is it?"

"That you reveal to no one the fact that I have undertaken to commit a crime. You of course are at liberty to play the ferret, and convict me—if you can."

"As surely as you commit a crime, so surely will I convict you of it," replied Mr. Barnes. "It will be perhaps to my interest to keep what I know to myself, but it will

not do to make any promises to you. I must be free to act as circumstances direct."

"Very good. I will tell you where I am stopping, and I give you permission to call to see me whenever you please, day or night. I have a suite of rooms at the Fifth Avenue. Now let me ask you one question. Do you think that I committed this robbery?"

"I will answer you with a question. Did you commit this robbery?"

"Capital. I see I have a foeman worthy of my steel. Well—we will leave both questions unanswered, for the present."

CHAPTER III.

MR. BARNES DISCOVERS AN ARTISTIC MURDER.

WHILST the meal was progressing, a man silently passed through the room. No one would have guessed that he had any special motive in doing so, for he noticed no one. Neither would one have supposed that Mr. Barnes observed him, for he had his back turned. Yet this was the same individual who upon his instruction had followed Rose Mitchel when she left the train.

Breakfast over, the two men started to leave the restaurant. Reaching the stairway which leads above to the main floor, Mr. Barnes courteously stood aside to allow his companion to ascend first. Mr. Mitchel, however, with a wave of the hand, declined, and followed Mr. Barnes. Whether either had any special design in this was a thought occupying the minds of both as they silently passed up-stairs. Mr. Mitchel had a slight advantage, in that being behind he could watch the detective. There seemed, however, to be little to see. To be sure the man who had passed through the restaurant was idly leaning against the doorway, but as soon as Mr. Barnes's head appeared, and certainly before he could have been noticed by Mr. Mitchel, he stepped out into the street, crossed over, and disappeared into the bank building opposite.

Had any signal passed between these two detectives? Mr. Mitchel, despite his shrewdness in sending Mr. Barnes up-stairs ahead of him, saw none, yet this is what occurred: Mr. Barnes said adieu, and walked away. Mr. Mitchel stood in the doorway, gazing after him till he saw him enter the elevated railroad station; then, looking carefully about, he himself walked rapidly towards Sixth Avenue. He did not glance behind, or he might have seen the man in the bank step out and walk in the same direction. They had been gone about five minutes when Mr. Barnes once more appeared upon the scene. He stopped in the doorway, where the other detective had been leaning. Keenly scanning the panelling, his eye presently rested upon what he was seeking. Faintly written in pencil were the words "No. —— East Thirtieth." That was all, but it told Mr. Barnes that Rose Mitchel had been followed to this address, and as it tallied with that which she herself had given to him, he knew now that she could be found when wanted. Wetting his finger against the tip of his tongue, he drew it across the words, leaving nothing but a dirty smudge.

"Wilson is a keen one," thought the detective. "He did this trick well. Saw my nod, wrote that address, and got out of sight in an instant. I wonder if he can keep an eye on that shrewd scoundrel? Pshaw! I am giving the fellow too much credit. I must leave it to Wilson for to-day anyway, as I must get through with this Pettingill matter." Half an hour later he was at head-quarters talking with his assistants.

Meanwhile Wilson followed Mr. Mitchel to Broadway then down to the Casino, where he stopped to buy tickets; then out again, and down Broadway to the Fifth Avenue Hotel, which he entered. He nodded to the clerk, took his key, and passed up-stairs. Evidently he lived there. Wilson of course had no further definite instructions. From Mr. Barnes's backward nod, he had understood that he was to shadow this man, and under the circumstances it was his simple duty to do this until relieved by further orders. In these days of telephones it is easy enough to make hurried reports to head-quarters and then continue the pursuit. The Fifth Avenue is not a promising place in which to watch a man, provided the man knows that he is being watched. It has three exits—one on Broadway, and one each on Twenty-third and on Twenty-fourth Streets. Wilson flattered himself that Mr. Mitchel was unsuspicious, and therefore whichever way he might leave the building, he would first return his key at the desk. He consequently kept that point in view. Not half an hour had elapsed when his man appeared, gave up his key, as expected, and passed out by the Broadway door. Crossing the Avenue, he walked down Twenty-third Street, eastward; Wilson followed cautiously, going through the Park. At Third Avenue Mr. Mitchel climbed the elevated stairway, and Wilson was compelled to do the same, though this brought him unpleasantly close. Both men took the same train, Mr. Mitchel in the first coach, Wilson the last. At Forty-second Street Mr. Mitchel left the train, and crossed the bridge, but instead

of taking the annex for the Grand Central Depot, as one is expected to do, he slipped through the crowd to the main platform and took a train going back down-town. Wilson managed to get the same train, but he realized at once that his man either knew that he was followed, or else was taking extraordinary precautions. At Thirty-fourth Street station the trick was repeated, Mr. Mitchel crossing over the bridge and then taking an up-town train. What puzzled Wilson was that he could not detect that his man had noticed him. It seemed barely possible, as they had encountered crowds at both places, that he had escaped unobserved. He was more satisfied of this when, at Forty-second Street again, Mr. Mitchel once more left the train, crossed the bridge, and this time went forward, taking the coach for the Grand Central. Evidently all the manœuvring had merely been prompted by caution, and not having observed his shadow, the man was about to continue to his true destination. Mr. Mitchel had entered the coach by the first gate, and was seated quietly in the corner as Wilson passed on, going in by the gate at the opposite end. A moment later the guard slammed the gate at Wilson's end, and pulled the bell-rope. As quick as a flash Mr. Mitchel jumped up, and before he could be prevented, had left the coach just as it started, carrying away Wilson, completely outwitted and dumbfounded. As soon as the train stopped he darted down-stairs, and ran back towards the Third Avenue station ; but he knew it was useless, as it proved. He saw nothing of Mr. Mitchel.

Wilson was greatly disheartened, for he was most anxious to stand well with Mr. Barnes, his chief. Yet in revolving over the occurrences of the last half hour he could not see how he could have prevented the escape of his man, since it was evident that he had intentionally acted in a way to prevent pursuit. If one but knows or suspects that he is being shadowed, the Third Avenue elevated road, with its bridges at Thirty-fourth and Forty-second Streets, offers the most effectual means of eluding the most skilful detective. If Wilson had known anything whatever about the man who had escaped him, he might have been able to guess his destination, and so have caught up with him again by hurrying ahead and meeting him, as he had frequently done when following noted criminals with whose haunts he was acquainted. In this instance he was utterly in the dark, so could do nothing but swear.

If he could not report where Mr. Mitchel had gone, at least he might discover at what time he returned to his hotel, and possibly Mr. Barnes might receive some valuable hint by the lapse of time. With this idea, Wilson returned to the Fifth Avenue Hotel and waited patiently. He telephoned to head-quarters only to hear that Mr. Barnes had gone back to Boston to bring Pettingill to New York. Seven o'clock arrived, and yet his vigil was unrewarded. It suddenly occurred to him that as he had seen Mr. Mitchel purchase tickets for the Casino, that might be a good place to watch, though of course there was no certainty that they were for that night. Upon this

meagre hope he hastened up-town and stationed himself where he could keep an eye on all who entered. At ten minutes past eight he was about concluding that his task was useless when a cab stopped, and to his intense satisfaction he saw Mr. Mitchel alight, and then hand out a handsomely-dressed woman. Wilson had prepared himself for this possibility, by purchasing a ticket of admission, so that he followed the couple into the theatre, determined not to lose sight of his man again. The opera over, he found it easy to shadow the two, as the woman declined the proffered cab, perchance because the exhilarating, though cold night air made a walk home inviting. He was, however, somewhat amazed at last to see them enter the very apartment-house on Thirtieth Street to which he had traced Rose Mitchel in the morning. His mind was at once set at ease, for since both of his birds had flown to the same dove-cot, it seemed plain that they were connected. Evidently it was to this house that Mr. Mitchel had gone after eluding him in the morning. At least so argued the astute detective.

Wilson had waited opposite the building perhaps an hour, lulled into abstraction of thought by the silence of the neighborhood, when he was startled by hearing a piercing shriek, loud and long continued, which then died away, and all was still again. Whether it came from the apartment-house or one of the private dwellings next to it, he was in doubt. That it was a woman's cry he felt sure. Was it a cry of pain, or the shriek of nightmare? He could not tell. That solitary, awful cry,

disturbing the death-like stillness, seemed uncanny. It made him shiver and draw his cloak closer about him. If it had only been repeated, after he was on the alert, he would have felt better satisfied; but though he listened intently he heard nothing. Ten minutes later, another thing occurred, which attracted his attention. A light in a window on the fifth floor was extinguished. There was certainly nothing suspicious about this, for lights are usually put out when one retires. He noticed it because it was the only light which showed from any of the windows during his vigil. Whilst he was thinking of this, the door opposite opened and a man emerged. Judging it to be Mr. Mitchel, he hastily followed. That there might certainly be no mistake, Wilson walked rapidly enough to reach the Avenue corner ahead of the man, when he crossed, so timing himself that he passed in front of the other just as they both reached the street lamp. Taking a quick, but thorough look, Wilson saw that it was not Mr. Mitchel, so abandoned the pursuit, going back quickly towards the apartment-house. He had proceeded but a few paces, when he met Mr. Mitchel coming rapidly towards him. Breathing a sigh of relief, he passed, then crossed the street, and with his usual skill readily kept Mr. Mitchel in sight till he entered the Fifth Avenue Hotel. Wilson saw him take his key and go up-stairs, so that he felt that his vigil was over for that night. Looking at his watch he noted that it was just one o'clock. Going into the reading-room he wrote a report of the day's occurrences and then calling a messenger, sent it to

head-quarters addressed to Mr. Barnes. This done he felt entitled to hurry home for a short sleep—short, because he knew it would be his duty to be on the watch again the next day, and until he received further instructions from Mr. Barnes.

Mr. Barnes had immediately after his arrival obtained the requisition papers for which he had telegraphed, and which he found awaiting him. With these he had returned to Boston the same day, and obtaining his prisoner succeeded in catching the midnight train once more, arriving in New York with the loss of but a single day from the new case which so absorbed all his interest.

Thus the morning after that on which the jewel robbery had been discovered he entered his offices quite early, having delivered his prisoner at police head quarters.

When he read Wilson's letter, the only sign which he gave of dissatisfaction was a nervous pull at one corner of his moustache. He read the paper through three times, then tore it carefully into tiny pieces, doing it so accurately that they were all nearly of the same size and shape. Any one who should attempt to piece together a note which Mr. Barnes had thus destroyed, would have a task. Standing by the window he tossed them high in the air and saw them scattered by the wind.

At half past eight o'clock he stood before the apartment-house in East Thirtieth Street. The janitor was sweeping from the pavement a light snow which had fallen in the early hours of the morning.

Mr. Barnes without speaking to the man walked into the vestibule and scanned the names over the letter-boxes. None of them contained the one which he sought, but there was no card in No. 5. Recalling that in Wilson's report a light had disappeared from a window on the fifth floor, he knew that it could not be unoccupied. To get in, he resorted to a trick often practised by sneak thieves. He rang the bell of No. 1, and when the door silently swung open he walked in, apologizing to the servant on the first landing for having "rung the wrong bell," and proceeded up to the fifth floor. Here he rang the bell of the private hall belonging to that special apartment. He could have rung the lower bell of this apartment at the outset, but he wished to make it impossible for anyone to leave after his signal announced visitors. He stood several minutes and heard no sound from within. A second pull at the bell produced no better results. Taking a firm hold of the door-knob, he slowly turned it, making not the slightest noise. To his surprise the door yielded when he pressed, and in a moment he had passed in and closed it behind him. His first idea was, that after all he had entered an empty apartment, but a glance into the room at the farther end of the hall, showed him that it was a furnished parlor. He hesitated a moment, then walked stealthily towards that room and looking in saw no one. He tip-toed back to the hall-door, turned the key, took it from the lock and dropped it into his pocket. Again he passed forward to the parlor, this time entering it. It was elegantly and tastily fur-

nished. The windows opened on the street. Between them stood a cabinet writing-desk, open, as though recently used. Beside it was an enamel piano-lamp, possibly the same which had furnished the light which Wilson had suddenly missed several hours before. Oppo site the windows a pair of folding glass doors communicated with an apartment beyond. These were closed. Peeping through a part of the pattern cut in the glass, Mr. Barnes could just distinguish the form of a woman in bed, her long hair hanging down from the pillow. This sight made him uncertain as to the next move. This was possibly Mrs. Rose Mitchel, as she had announced herself. She was asleep, and he had entered her apartment without any warrant for doing so. True he looked upon her with some suspicion, but the most innocent frequently suffer in this way, and without better reason than he had, he knew that he could not account legally for what he was doing. As he stood by the glass doors cogitating, he chanced to look down. Instantly his eye was attracted by that which made him shiver, as accustomed as he was to strange sights. It was a tiny red stream, which had managed to pass under the door and had then run along the edge of the carpet for the space of a few inches. Instantly he stooped, dipped his finger into it, and then ejaculated under his breath :

"Blood, and clotted."

Standing upright, he once more peered into the room. The figure in bed had not moved. Without further hesitation he slowly slid the doors apart. One glance within,

and murmuring the single word "Murder," Mr. Barnes was no longer slow in his actions. Stepping across a big pool of blood which stained the carpet, he stood at the side of the bed. He recognized the features of the woman who had claimed that she had been robbed of her diamonds. She seemed sleeping, save that there was an expression of pain on the features, a contraction of the skin between the eyebrows, and one corner of the mouth drawn aside, the whole kept in this position by the rigidity of death. The manner of her death was as simple as it was cruel. Her throat had been cut as she slept. This seemed indicated by the fact that she was clad in her night-dress. One thing that puzzled Mr. Barnes at once, was the pool of blood near the door. It was fully six feet from the head of the bed, and whilst there was another just by the bedstead, formed by blood which had trickled from the wound, running down the sheets and so dropping to the floor, the two pools did not communicate.

"Well," thought Mr. Barnes, "I am first on the scene this time, and no busybodies shall tumble things about till I have studied their significance."

This room had not been designed for a sleeping apartment but rather as a dining-room, which, upon occasion, could be opened into the parlor, converting the two into one. There was one window upon an air-shaft, and in an angle was a handsome carved oak mantel with fireplace below. Mr. Barnes raised the curtain over the window, letting in more light. Looking around he noticed

almost immediately two things : first, that a basin stood on a washstand half filled with water, the color of which plainly indicated that the murderer had washed off tell-tale marks before taking his departure. Second, that in the fireplace was a pile of ashes.

"The scoundrel has burned evidence against him, and deliberately washed the blood from his person before going away. Let me see, what was it that Mitchel said : 'I should have stopped to wash the stain from the carpet whilst fresh, and also from the dog's mouth.' That is what he told his friend he would do if bitten whilst committing a crime. In this instance the 'stain on the carpet' was too much for him, but he washed it from himself. Can it be that a man lives who, contemplating a deed of this character, would make a wager that he would not be detected. Bah. It is impossible." Thus thought Mr. Barnes as he studied the evidence before him. He next turned to the woman's clothing which lay on a chair. He rummaged through the pocket, but found nothing. In handling the petticoat he noticed that a piece had been cut from the band. Examining the other garments he soon saw that the same had been done to them all. Like a flash an idea struck him. Going over to the bed he searched for some mark on the garments which were on the corpse. He could find none until he lifted the body up and turned it over, when he found that a piece had been cut from the night-dress.

"That accounts for the blood by the door," thought Mr. Barnes. "He took her out of the bed to get her nearer

to the light, so that he could find the initials marked on the clothing. Whilst she lay by the door the blood flowed and accumulated. Then he put her back in bed so that he would not need to step over her in walking about the room. What a calculating villain. There is one significant fact here. Her name cannot have been Rose Mitchel, or there would have been no reason for destroying these marks, since she had given that name to several."

Mr. Barnes next brushed the charred ashes from the grate upon a newspaper, and carried them to the window in the front room. His examination satisfied him of two things ; the murderer had burned the bits of cloth cut from the various garments, and also a number of letters. That the fellow was studiously careful was plain from the fact that the burning had been thoroughly done ; nothing had escaped the flame save two buttons with a bit of cloth attached, and various corners of envelopes. With disgust Mr. Barnes threw the ashes back where he had found them.

Next he paid his attention to the cabinet desk which stood open. He pulled out all the drawers, and peered into every nook and cranny, but his search was fruitless. He found nothing but blank paper and envelopes, and these of common kind.

Once more returning to the room where the corpse lay, he noticed a trunk from which protruded a part of a garment. Raising the lid he found everything within in a promiscuous pile. Evidently it had been hastily searched and carelessly repacked. Mr. Barnes took each article

out and examined it closely. Everything upon which a name might have been written showed a place where a piece had been cut out. "There must be some good reason for hiding this woman's identity, or the scoundrel would not have been so thorough in his work," thought Mr. Barnes. Just then in replacing the clothing he heard a crinkling sound which indicated that a bit of paper was in the pocket of the garment. Hastily he withdrew it, and was delighted to observe writing. "A clue at last," he murmured, hurrying to the front-room window to read it. For what he found see p. 44.

This was all, no name being signed. Mr. Barnes regretted this last fact, but felt that he held a most important paper in his hand, since it seemed to be corroborative of the woman's statement that she had lost a lot of unset jewels. It was of great value to have so minute a description of the stolen gems. Folding the paper carefully, he placed it in his wallet, and then returned to the vicinity of the corpse. Looking closely at the cut in the neck, the detective determined that the assassin had used an ordinary pocket-knife, for the wound was neither deep nor long. It severed the jugular vein, which seemed to have been the aim of the murderer. It was from this circumstance that the detective decided that the woman had been attacked as she slept. This aroused the question "Did the murderer have the means of entering the house without attracting attention? Either he must have had a night-key, or else some one must have admitted him." Mr. Barnes started as the thought recurred to

List of Jewels.

One Diamond	15½ carats	$15.000
One Emerald	15⅞ carats	15.000
One Ruby	15⅞ carats	20.000
One Sapphire	10 carats	5.000
One Pearl	Pear shaped white	15.000
One Pearl	Pear shaped Black	10.000
One Pearl	white egg shaped	5.000
One Pearl	Black egg shaped	5.000
One Canary Diamond		5.000
One Topaz	200 carats	5.000
		$100.000

The ten jewels are all perfect specimens of their kind. The first four are cut exactly alike; the pear shaped pearls are similar in size and shape, as are also the egg pearls. The Canary diamond is oblong, and the Topaz unexcelled.

The lot are contained in a red Russia leather case, four by six inches in size lined with black satin. Each jewel fits in a special depression and is held in place, by a gold wire clasp.

The case has the name "MITCHEL" in gold letters across the band which straps around it.

him that Wilson had seen Mr. Mitchel enter the house some time before the scream was heard, and depart some time after. Was this the woman who had accompanied him to the theatre? If so, how could she have retired and fallen to sleep so quickly? Evidently further light must be thrown upon this aspect of the case.

Whilst meditating, the detective's eye roamed about the room, and finally rested upon a shining object which lay on the floor near the trunk. A ray of light from the front window just reached it and made it glitter. Mr. Barnes looked at it for some moments mechanically, stooping presently to pick it up, with little thought of what he did. He had scarcely examined it, however, before a gleam of triumph glistened in his eye. He held in his hand a button, which was a cut cameo upon which was carved the profile head of a woman, beneath which appeared the name "Juliet."

CHAPTER IV.

DIAMOND CUT DIAMOND.

Mr. Barnes, after discovering the cameo button, immediately left the apartment. With little loss of time he reached the Fifth Avenue Hotel. He found Wilson sitting in the lobby, and learned from him that Mr. Mitchel had not yet come down-stairs. He made his subordinate happy, by complimenting him upon his work, and exonerating him from blame because of his having lost his man for a few hours the day before. With the button in his pocket, Mr. Barnes found it easy to be good-natured. If the truth were known, he was chuckling to himself. The thought which proved such a fund of merriment was the idea that his man up-stairs had proven himself just as human as ordinary criminals, since he had left behind him the very tell-tale mark which he had boasted would not be found after he had committed his crime. Externally, however, there was no sign to show that Mr. Barnes was in any way excited. He calmly asked at the desk for Mr. Mitchel, and sent up his card just as any ordinary visitor might have done. In a few moments the hall-boy returned with the curt message, "Come up."

Mr. Barnes was shown up one flight of stairs into a suite of two rooms and a bath, overlooking Twenty-third

Street. The room which he passed into from the hall was fitted up like a bachelor's parlor. Comfortable stuffed chairs and two sofas, a folding reading-chair, an upright piano in mahogany case with handsome piano-lamp beside it, a carved centre-table on which stood a reading-lamp, cigar case in bronze, photo-albums, handsome pictures on the walls in gold frames, elegant vases on the mantel, an onyx clock, a full-sized figure of a Moor carved in wood serving as a card-receiver,—in fact everything about the place was significant of wealth, luxury, and refinement. Could this be the den of a murderer? It seemed not, unless there might be some powerful hidden motive, which would make a man who was evidently a gentleman, stoop to such a crime. According to Mr. Barnes's experience such a motive must involve a woman. As yet there was no woman in this case, save the corpse which he had just left. All this flashed through the detective's mind as he noted his surroundings in a few swift glances. Then he heard a voice from the next room say:

"Come in, Mr. Barnes: we must not stand upon ceremony with one another."

Mr. Barnes in answer to the invitation crossed into the adjoining room and noticed at once that the sleeping apartment was as luxurious as the parlor. Mr. Mitchel was standing in front of a mirror shaving himself, being robed in a silk morning wrapper.

"Pardon this intrusion," began Mr. Barnes. "But you told me I might call at any time, and——"

"No excuses necessary, except from me. But I must finish shaving, you know. A man can't talk with lather on one side of his face."

"Certainly not. Don't hurry, I can wait."

"Thank you. Take a seat. You will find that arm-chair by the bed comfortable. This is an odd hour to be making one's toilet but the fact is I was out late last night."

"At the club, I suppose," said Mr. Barnes, wishing to see if Mr. Mitchel would lie to him. In this he was disappointed, for the reply was:

"No, I went to the Casino. Lillian Russell you know has returned. I had promised a friend to go, so we went."

"A gentleman?"

"Are you not getting inquisitive? No, not a gentleman, but a lady. In fact, that is her picture on that easel."

Mr. Barnes looked, and saw an oil painting representing a marvellously beautiful female head. A brunette of strong emotions and great will power if her portrait were truthful. Here was a significant fact. Mr. Mitchel said that he had been to the Casino with this woman. Wilson claimed that they had gone to the house where the murdered woman lay. It would seem that Mr. Mitchel's friend must live there, and thus he had gained access the night before. Did he know that the other also lived there, and did he go into her apartment after leaving his companion? As this passed through Mr. Barnes's mind his eyes wandered across the bed. He saw a waistcoat

upon which he observed two buttons similar to the one which he had secreted in his pocket. Stealthily he reached his hand towards the bed, but his fingers had scarcely touched the waistcoat, when Mr. Mitchel said, without turning from his shaving :

"There is no money in that waistcoat, Mr. Barnes."

"What do you mean to insinuate," said Mr. Barnes angrily, withdrawing his hand quickly. Mr. Mitchel paused a moment before replying, deliberately made one or two more sweeps with his razor, then turned and faced the detective.

"I mean, Mr. Barnes, that you forgot that I was looking into a mirror."

"Your remark indicated that I meant to steal."

"Did it? I am sorry. But really you should not adopt a thief's stealthy methods if you are so sensitive. When I invite a gentleman into my private room, I do not expect to have him fingering my clothing whilst my back is turned."

"Take care, Mr. Mitchel, you are speaking to a detective. If I did stretch my hand towards your clothing it was with no wrong intent and you know it."

"Certainly I do, and what is more I know just what you were wishing to do. You must not get angered so easily. I should not have used the words which I did, but to tell you the truth I was piqued."

"I don't understand."

"It hurt my feelings to have you treat me just like an ordinary criminal. That you should think I would let

you come in here and make whatever examinations you have in your mind, right before my very eyes, wounded my pride. I never should have turned my back upon you except that I faced a mirror. I told you I know what you wished to do. It was to examine the buttons on my vest, was it not?"

Mr. Barnes was staggered but did not show it. Calmly he said:

"As you know, I overheard your conversation on the train. You spoke of having a set of five curious buttons and ——"

"Pardon me, I said six, not five." Once more Mr. Barnes had failed to trap the man. He suggested five, hoping that Mr. Mitchel might claim that to have been the original number, thus eliminating the lost one.

"Of course, you did say six, now I remember," he continued, "and I think you will admit it was not unnatural curiosity which led me to wish to see them, that—that—well that I might recognize them again."

"A very laudable intent. But my dear Mr. Barnes, I have told you that you may call upon me at any time, and ask me any questions you please. Why did you not frankly ask me to show you the buttons?"

"I should have done so. I do so now."

"They are in the vest. You may examine them if you desire it."

Mr. Barnes took up the vest, and was puzzled to find six buttons, three of Juliet and three of Romeo. Still he was satisfied, for they were identical with the one in

his pocket. It occurred to him that this man who was so careful in his precautions, might have lied as to the number in the set, and have said six when in reality there were seven. A few questions about the buttons seemed opportune.

"These are very beautiful, Mr. Mitchel, and unique too. I have never heard of cameo buttons before. I think you said they were made expressly for you."

Mr. Mitchel dropped into a cushioned rocker before he replied:

"These buttons were made for me, and they are exquisite specimens of the graver's art. Cameo buttons, however, are not so uncommon as you suppose, though they are more usually worn by women, and, in fact, it was a woman's idea to have these cut. I should not have ——"

"By Jove!" said Mr. Barnes, "the Romeo buttons are copies from your likeness, and good portraits too."

"Ah! You have noticed that, have you?"

"Yes, and the Juliets are copies of that picture." Mr. Barnes was getting excited, for if these buttons were portraits, and the one in his pocket was that of the woman whose likeness stood on the easel, it was very evident that they were connected. Mr. Mitchel eyed him keenly.

"Mr. Barnes, you are disturbed. What is it?"

"I am not disturbed."

"You are, and it is the sight of those buttons which has caused it. Now tell me your reason for coming here this morning."

Mr. Barnes thought the time had come to strike a deciding blow.

"Mr. Mitchel, first answer one question, and think well before you reply. How many buttons were made for this set?"

"Seven," answered Mr. Mitchel, so promptly that Mr. Barnes could only repeat, amazed:

"Seven? But you said six only a moment ago!"

"I know what I said. I never forget any statement that I make, and all my statements are accurate. I said that six is the entire set. Now you ask me what was the original number, and I reply seven. Is that clear?"

"Then the other button has been lost?"

"Not at all. I know where it is."

"Then what do you mean by saying that the set now is only six?"

"Excuse me, Mr. Barnes, if I decline to answer that question. I have replied now to several since I asked you why you came here this morning."

"I will tell you," said the detective, playing his trump card, as he thought. "I have been examining the place where your crime was committed, and I have found that seventh button!" If Mr. Barnes expected Mr. Mitchel to recoil with fear, or tremble, or do anything that an ordinary criminal does when brought face to face with evidence of his guilt, he must have been disappointed. But it is safe to assume that by this time so skillful a man as Mr. Barnes did not expect so consummate an actor as Mr. Mitchel to betray feeling. He did show some inter-

est, however, for he arose from his chair and, walking up to Mr. Barnes, he asked simply:

"Have you it with you? May I see it?"

Mr. Barnes hesitated a moment, wondering if he risked losing the button by handing it to him. He decided to give it to him, and did so.

Mr. Mitchel looked at it closely, as though an expert, and after several moments of silence, he tossed it carelessly into the air, catching it as it came down, and then said:

"This would make a pretty situation in a play, Mr. Barnes. Follow me. Detective discovers crime, and finds curious button. Goes straight to criminal, and boldly tells him of the fact. Criminal admits that he has but six buttons out of seven, and asks to see the button found. Detective foolishly hands it to him. Then criminal smiles blandly, and says: 'Mr. Detective, now I have seven buttons, and my set is complete again. What are you going to do about it?'"

"And the detective would reply," said Mr. Barnes, falling into the humor of the situation: 'Mr. Criminal, I will just take that back by force.'"

"Exactly. You catch the spirit of the stage picture. Then, fight between two men, applause from the gallery, and victory for either party, as the author has decided. That is the way it would be done in a play. But in real life it is different. I simply hand you back your button, thus," handing button to Mr. Barnes, and bowing politely, and then remarked: "Mr. Barnes, you are welcome to that. It is not a part of my set!"

"Not a part of your set?" echoed the detective, dumbfounded.

"Not a part of my set. I am sorry to disappoint you, but so it is. I will even explain, for I sympathize with you. I told you the set was originally seven. So it was, but the seventh button has the head of Shakespeare on it. All seven were given to me by my friend, but as I could wear but six, I returned to her this odd Shakespeare button, which I had made into a breast-pin, and kept the others, thus reducing the set of buttons to six. The seventh is no longer a button, you see."

"But how do you account for the fact that this button which I have is plainly a portrait of your friend, and a counterpart to those on your vest?"

"My dear Mr. Barnes, I don't account for it. I don't have to, you know. That sort of thing is your business."

"What if I should decide to arrest you at once, and ask a jury to determine whether your original set included this button or not?"

"That would be inconvenient to me, of course. But it is one of those things that we risk every day. I mean arrest by some blundering detective. Pardon me, do not get angry again; I do not allude to yourself. I am quite sure that you are too shrewd to arrest me."

"And why so pray?"

"Because I am surely not going to run away in the first place, and secondly you would gain nothing, since it would be so easy for me to prove all that I have told you.

and in your mind you are saying to yourself that I have not lied to you. Really I have not."

"I have only one thing more to say to you, Mr. Mitchel," said Mr. Barnes, rising. "Will you show me that seventh button, or breast-pin?"

"That is asking a great deal, but I will grant your request upon one condition. Think well before you make the bargain. When I made that wager I did not calculate the possibility of entangling in my scandal the name of the woman whom I love dearest on earth. That is the portrait of the woman who will soon become my wife. As I have said, she has the other button and wears it constantly. You will gain nothing by seeing it, for it will simply corroborate my word, which I think you believe now. I will take you to her and she will tell you of these buttons, if you promise me never to annoy her in any way in connection with this affair."

"I will give you that promise cheerfully. I have no wish to annoy a lady."

"That is for you to decide. Meet me in the lobby at noon precisely, and I will take you to her house. And now will you excuse me whilst I complete my toilet?"

CHAPTER V.

THE SEVENTH BUTTON.

On the second floor of the apartment-house in East Thirtieth Street lived Mrs. Mortimer Remsen, and her two daughters, Emily and Dora.

Mrs. Remsen's husband had been dead more than ten years, but he had amassed a handsome fortune, which left his family able to maintain the position in New York society to which they were heirs by birth and breeding. They lived in the most commodious apartment in the magnificent building in Thirtieth Street, and were surrounded by an elegant luxury which results from a combination of wealth and refined taste. They entertained frequently, and Mrs. Remsen, still a handsome woman, was always a conspicuous figure at the most notable social and charitable events of the season.

Emily, the eldest daughter, was a woman of twenty-six, who commanded, rather than attracted, admiration. She was of admirable proportions, easy and regal carriage, with a fine head well poised on magnificent shoulders. As to her face—well, I cannot describe it better than did the eminent artist Gaston de Castilla, who was requested to paint her portrait. "Madam," said he, to her mother, "I do not like to undertake your commission. Your

daughter has one of those marvellous faces which defies art. Every feature is a departure from recognized standards, and yet the result is nobility and beauty of the highest type. Only Nature herself can produce such effects. Through an imperfect countenance she sheds the rays of an illumined soul, till all faults are obliterated, forgotten. We poor artists cannot hope to supply on our cold canvas what so singular a face must have, to make it beautiful." Nevertheless, he did paint the portrait, the one which the detective had seen in Mr. Mitchel's room, and he had succeeded at least in suggesting the marvellous effects of character, revealing itself through the features. Other painters had failed, perhaps because they appreciated less than he what they attempted.

This description also gives a hint of the woman herself. A combination of all the softer emotional elements, she dominated self and others by a supreme will. She was rarely disobeyed by suitor or by servant. That she had engaged herself to marry Mr. Mitchel had surprised the entire circle within which she moved, and yet perhaps the secret of his success lay in the simple fact that he had had the courage to ask for her, and to do so in a loving but masterful way which plainly showed that he anticipated no refusal or coy hesitancy. His wooing had been of an impetuous whirlwind kind, and he was affianced to her within a month of their acquaintance.

It was this fact which had caused the most comment. Mr. Mitchel moved in good society, but he was a new-

comer, and now that he had captured the prize of the matrimonial market, all where asking "Who is he?" a question which none seemed able to answer. He was a Southerner and that single fact had shed about him a halo of attractive light which had blinded the eyes of those who feebly attempted to look deeper.

Mrs. Remsen had protested when Emily announced her engagement, but Emily had replied, "Mother, I have given my word," and the discussion was ended. A few moments later she had affectionately seated herself at her mother's feet, and after tenderly kissing her, whispered "I love him. He is my king," and then buried her head in her parent's lap. Few women argue against an appeal of that nature. Thus Emily and Mr. Mitchel became engaged, after which he came and went much as though he were the master of the house. Why not, since he had become the master of its mistress?

Dora was her sister's antithesis, save that both were brunettes. She was simply a lovable, docile, impressionable, pretty girl. She adored her mother, and worshipped her sister whom she called "The Queen." Dora was only seventeen. There had been three boys born between the sisters, but they had died in infancy.

The two girls were in the sumptuous parlor of their apartment, Emily lying on the soft lounge, whilst Dora sat near her in a cosy armchair which made her look almost a little girl.

"Queen, did you enjoy the opera last night?" asked Dora.

"Oh! yes," replied Emily, "But you know, my dear, comic opera—is comic opera, and all is said."

"It 's all very fine for you to talk in that patronizing way, Queen, about amusement, but it is different with me. I have not outgrown the theatre yet. I 'll tell you what I have been thinking of seriously—"

"Seriously," laughed Emily, pinching her pretty sister's cheek. "Why you sly little rogue, you could n't be serious if you tried."

"Oh! could n't I! But listen. I am going to ask Bob——"

"Bob?"

"Mr. Mitchel, you know. I told him last night that I mean to call him Bob after this, and he kissed me and said it was a bargain."

"Kissed you, did he? Well Miss Impudence, I like that."

"So did I. But you need not scold, because you know what Bob says is law. You are as much afraid of him as—well as all the rest of the men are of you. But I have n't told you what I am going to do. I want Bob to take me with you both, whenever you go to the theatre."

"Oho! So that is your little plot, is it?"

"Yes! What do you think of it?"

"What do I think of it? Now I shall surprise you. I think it is an excellent idea. I love you very much, my little sweetheart sister, and shall be only too glad to see you have as much pleasure as your heart longs for."

"You darling Queen!" and with an impetuous bound the younger girl was on her knees with her arms around Emily, raining kisses upon her lips. This effusive show of affection, Emily received with evident pleasure, for, however dignified she could be in her bearing, leaving the impression that she was cold, in reality she was warm-hearted to a degree which would have surprised the gossips.

Nestling her head in the folds of her sister's soft silk gown, thus hiding her face, Dora said timidly:

"May I tell you something Queen?"

"Ha! You mischief, what have you to confess now?"

"I have invited a man to call here," replied Dora suddenly raising her head, and speaking with a different touch in her tones.

"Is that all?" laughed Emily, "Who is the monster? Where did you meet him?"

"I have met him several times, at afternoon teas. The last time he asked me if he might call—and I told him he could do so this afternoon, when I thought you would be at home. Was it very wrong?"

"Well, Dora, I don't think it was exactly proper, but perhaps it may be all right, since you have met him at several of our friends' houses. But what is his name?"

"Alphonse Thauret."

"A Frenchman?"

"Yes, though he speaks English with only a very slight accent."

"I don't like Frenchmen. I know it is preposterous

prejudice but I never meet one without thinking him a possible adventurer. With their soft sycophantic ways, they remind me of cats, and I expect them to show their claws at any moment. However, pet, perhaps your Frenchman will not call, and then——"

"Oh! but he will. He said he would come this afternoon. That is why I have been so nervous. I was afraid you might be going out, and——"

"No, I will be here to protect you. Besides I expect Bob at any moment. He said he would come about noon, and it is after that already. Perhaps that is he now; yes, three rings.

"Oh, so Romeo and Juliet have signals! But jump up, Queen, he must not catch us lying down, and 'spooning.'"

A moment later Mr. Mitchel entered to find both girls seated in the most dignified manner, reading novels. Walking over to Emily he stooped, and kissed her lightly on the forehead, whispering "My Queen." Next he patted Dora on the head, as one would pat a child.

"Emily I have taken the liberty of telling a friend of mine that he might call here. You do not mind?"

"Why, of course not, Roy." She had made this name for him by eliminating the first syllable of his second name, Leroy. She told him, that thus she could call him King, without heralding it to the world. Almost immediately the bell sounded again, and Mr. Barnes was introduced. Mr. Mitchel presented him to the two ladies, and then devoted himself to Dora, thus leaving the

detective perfectly free to converse with Emily. Being well educated, and having travelled through England early in life, Mr. Barnes soon made himself at ease, and talked like any society man. Presently Mr. Mitchel took Dora to the window and stood there looking out and chatting, apparently absorbed and unobservant of the others. Mr. Barnes decided that this was his opportunity.

"Pardon me, Miss Remsen, and let the interest of a collector excuse the impertinence of my noticing that beautiful pin which you wear. Cameos I think are too little appreciated nowadays. They are passed by, whilst statuettes bring fancy prices. Yet does it not require exquisite skill to carve so small an object?"

"I agree with you, Mr. Barnes, and am not at all angry with you for admiring my pin. You may look at it if you wish." Saying which she took it off and handed it to him. It was the fac-simile of those which Mr. Mitchel wore as buttons, save that it bore the image of Shakespeare. The cameo was mounted in a gold frame, and, surrounded by diamonds, made a beautiful ornament. "You would never guess, Mr. Barnes that that was once an ordinary button?"

Mr. Barnes assumed an expression of surprise as though the idea was entirely new to him. All he said was:

"It may have been a button, but surely never an ordinary one."

"Well no, not an ordinary one of course. I suppose you know that I am engaged to your friend?"

Mr. Barnes assented with a bow, and Emily continued:

"Shortly after we became engaged, I went to Europe, and whilst there I came across a jeweller who produced the most beautiful carvings in cameo and intaglio. I ordered a set made to be used for buttons."

"All similar to this?"

"Similar but not identical. This one has Shakespeare's head. The others represent Romeo and Juliet."

Mr. Barnes determined upon a bold stroke. Taking the button from his pocket, and handing it to Emily, he said quietly:

"Here is a cameo of Juliet. Perhaps it may interest you?"

"Why this is extraordinary! It is one of my set!"

"One of yours, why have you lost one? How many did you have?"

"There were seven including this one of Shakespeare. The other six——" Here she stopped and colored deeply.

"Miss Remsen, you think that is one of the original set. If so of course it is yours, and I should be too glad to restore it to you. But have you lost one?"

"Lost one? No —— that is, I don't know." She seemed much confused, and looked intently at the button. Suddenly her whole expression changed, and with her self possession fully restored she startled Mr. Barnes by saying, "I am mistaken. This is not one of the original set. Yet it is very similar."

Mr. Barnes did not know what to think. Did she

divine that there might be some danger in admitting that there was a seventh button still? Had that matchless schemer Mitchel sent her a note warning her to say that there were but seven in the original set? He could not decide at once, but hazarded one more stroke.

"Miss Remsen, I have seen your portrait, and it struck me that that button is a copy of it. What do you think?"

The girl once more became confused and stammered.

"I don't know," then suddenly, and with complete composure again, "Yes, I think you are right. This is a copy from my picture. The portrait was made last summer, and afterwards I allowed the artist to exhibit it. I think photographs were made from it, and possibly some cameo cutter has used it for his work."

This was ingenious, but not satisfactory to Mr. Barnes, for he knew that it was far from probable that another gem-cutter should have used the picture, and then have called it Juliet. Beside it would have been too great a coincidence to make a button of it. He decided therefore that the girl was doing the best she could to invent a plausible explanation to a question, which Mr. Mitchel himself had simply refused to answer. Not wishing to arouse any suspicion in her mind that he doubted her word, he replied quickly:

"That is very likely, and surely he could not have chosen a better face for his subject."

"Mr. Barnes," said Emily, "you offered just now to give me this, thinking that I had lost it. Of course I

should not accept a present from one whom I have had the pleasure of knowing for so short a time, but you are Mr. Mitchel's friend, and as I would really prefer not to have my portrait in the hands of strangers, I accept your gift with thanks."

This was entirely unexpected. When Mr. Barnes had made the remark that he would be glad to restore her her own, he had done so feeling safe, because to obtain it she would need to admit that she had lost it. Now it seemed that she had deprived him of his piece of evidence. He did not know what to say, when Mr Mitchel walked across to them and remarked pleasantly :

"Well, Emily, do you find my friend Mr. Barnes entertaining ?"

"Mr. Barnes has been most agreeable, Roy, and see, he has actually given me a present," saying which she handed the button to Mr. Mitchel across whose countenance Mr. Barnes thought he saw a fleeting smile of triumph pass.

"I am proud of you, Emily. You command homage wherever you extend your influence. Do you know, Mr. Barnes refused to give this cameo to me, only this morning. You can guess why I wanted it."

"Because it has my picture copied on it ?"

"Exactly. Mr. Barnes, allow me to add my thanks to those of Miss Remsen. You can readily appreciate why we prefer to have this bauble in our own possession ?"

Mr. Barnes thought that he could. He saw that he was fairly caught and that he could do nothing without

making a scene. He met a glance from Mr. Mitchel which he knew was meant to remind him of his promise not to annoy Miss Remsen. He had about decided that he had been a fool to make such a promise and to have visited the place at all, when he suddenly changed his mind, as a servant announced :

"Mr. Alphonse Thauret."

Immediately the detective remembered the name. It was upon the card given to him by the Frenchman who had left the train at Stamford. He was watching Mr. Mitchel when the new-comer was thus unexpectedly announced, and he thought he detected a glance of displeasure. Were these two men acquainted, accomplices perhaps ?

"Mr. Mitchel, let me present Mr. Thauret," said Dora.

"I have had the pleasure of meeting the gentleman before," replied Mr. Mitchel, and with a stiff bow he crossed to the side of Emily as though to prevent an introduction to her. This, of course, was impossible, and Mr. Mitchel was plainly annoyed. Emily stepped forward, extended her hand to Mr. Thauret, and then turning, presented him to Mr. Barnes, who had arisen, and who simply bowed.

"Ah! Mr. Barnes," said the Frenchman, "I am delighted to meet you again."

"Why, do you know Mr. Barnes also?" cried Dora greatly surprised.

"Who does not know Mr. Barnes, the celebrated detec-

tive." He said this in that extremely polite tone so much assumed by his race, when inclined to be most complimentary. Yet Mr. Barnes thought that he had some sinister motive in thus proclaiming his connection with the police. Was it to prevent him from calling upon these women again? If so he failed to make the desired impression upon Dora, for that young woman seemed fairly enraptured.

"A detective?" said she. "Are you really the great Mr. Barnes?"

"I am a detective, but scarcely a great one."

"Oh! but you are, you are! I read all about the wonderful way in which you caught that man Pettingill. And now tell me, are you going to catch the man who robbed the woman on the Boston train yesterday?"

"How do you know that it is a man?" asked Mr. Barnes amused at her impetuosity, and pleased at the turn taken by the conversation.

"Oh! it is not a woman. I am sure of that. I read about it in the papers this morning. I bought three so as not to miss anything. No woman would have been clever enough to plan it all, and then carry it out so thoroughly."

"This is very interesting," said Mr. Thauret. "Of course I too have read the papers, but besides that, as you know, Mr. Barnes, I was on the train myself, and the first to be searched. I have thought of the case ever since. In my own country we claim that our detectives can unravel any mystery, and I am curious to know how

you will manage in an affair of this kind. The thief evidently is clever, do you not think so?"

Mr. Mitchel had drawn apart and apparently was absorbed in a conversation with Emily; nevertheless Mr. Barnes was confident that he missed little of what was being said by the group of which he himself was one. Under ordinary circumstances he would not for a moment have thought of speaking of so important a case before one who at least might be suspected of complicity. But these were not ordinary circumstances. Here were two men, about both of whom there was a mysterious connection with the crime, or crimes, which he was investigating. If either, or both, were guilty, it was evident from their courage in visiting unconcernedly at the very building in which the murder had been committed, that extreme skill would be required to obtain a conviction. The detective therefore considered that these men must be met with methods as bold as their own. Speaking in a tone loud enough to reach Mr. Mitchel's ears he said:

"I think that the thief is clever, but that he is not so clever as he considers himself."

"How is that?"

"He believed—I say he, because like Miss Remsen, I think it is a man—"

"How delightful of you to agree with me," said Dora.

"This man then," continued Mr. Barnes, "considers that he has misled me. He thinks that when I directed that all the passengers should be searched, I did so

hoping to find the lost jewels, whereas I was not looking for the jewels, but for the thief."

"How could you do that?"

"You may think me egotistic, but I hoped to detect him by his conduct. I was entirely successful. I know who stole the jewels." This was a bold assertion, especially as Mr. Barnes had not decided the matter in his own mind. He wished to note the faces of these men, when he made the statement. He gained nothing by the manœuvre, for Mr. Mitchel seemed not to have heard, whilst the Frenchman quickly said:

"Bravo! Bravo! You are better than Lecocq. It is like a wizard's trick. You pass the suspects before you in review, and then, presto! you pick out the criminal with your eye. That is a charming method, and so simple!"

"Mr. Thauret," said Dora, "you are laughing at Mr. Barnes, and that is not good-natured. Mr. Barnes says he knows the thief. I believe him."

"Pardon! I believe him also. I did not mean to laugh. But tell me, Mr. Barnes, how did the man secrete the diamonds, I suppose they were diamonds, were they not?"

"Diamonds and other jewels. But let me ask you—— how would you have hidden them, had you been in his place?" This time the shot went home. Plainly the Frenchman did not like the suggestion of being himself the criminal. He quickly recovered his equanimity, however, and answered:

"Do you know, I have thought of that very thing. Of course I would probably make a bungle of it. Still I have thought of a way."

"A way by which he could have hidden the jewels so that a search could not have found them, and yet in a place accessible to himself afterwards?"

"I think so! Perhaps I am wrong, but I think my little plan would do that much. The newspaper says the jewels were unset stones. I should have pushed them into the cake of soap in the wash-room. No one would think to look for them there, and even if so, there would be nothing against me. Afterwards, I should have gone back, taken the soap, and the jewels would have been mine."

"You are mistaken."

"How so?"

"You were the first person searched, and I watched you till you left the train. It would have been difficult for you to come to New York from Stamford on another train, and then gain access to the coaches on a side track and in the hands of the scrub-women. Even then you would have failed, for I took all the soap away, and substituted new cakes before the second man was searched."

A smile on Mr. Mitchel's face proved that he was listening, and that he was pleased at the detective's cleverness. The Frenchman shugged his shoulders, and said, laughing:

"There, you see, I should never make a thief. Besides there was the satchel. I had forgotten about that. One could not hide a satchel in a cake of soap."

"But he could throw it out of a window, to mislead the man who picked it up," replied the detective.

"You are shrewd, Mr. Barnes," said Mr. Thauret, after a keen scrutiny, which Mr. Barnes thought betokened uneasiness. "But," he continued, "will you tell me how you think the thief hid the treasure on the train?"

"He hid it *off* the train," said Mr. Barnes, quickly, and to his satisfaction both his men started slightly. Evidently Mr. Mitchel decided that it was time for him to enter the game, for he crossed and joined the group, saying as he did so:

"Are you all discussing the train robbery?"

"Oh, yes!" said Dora. "And it is just lovely, the way Mr. Barnes has found out all about it!"

"Found out all about it? Has he, indeed?"

"Yes! He knows who the thief is, and that he hid the jewels off the train."

"How very clever of you, Mr. Barnes, to discover that. Where else could he have hidden them, since the train itself and everybody on it was searched?"

It irritated Mr. Barnes, the way in which Mr. Mitchel always seemed to belittle his skill. He was a trifle angry, therefore, as he made his next bold stroke.

"I will tell you, ladies and gentlemen, where the thief might have hidden the jewels, on the train—a place which no one thought of searching, not even myself."

"Oh! tell us!" exclaimed Dora. The two men looked interested, nothing more. Emily had come behind Mr. Mitchel, and slyly slipped her hand within his.

"The woman carried the jewels in a satchel. Suppose the thief had stolen the satchel and thrown it from the window. Missing that, the woman would have naturally concluded that the jewels were gone, would she not? Very well. The thief might have hidden the jewels in her own pocket whilst she slept." Mr. Barnes had hoped much from this proposition, but it was a distinct failure. Either that was not the thief's method, or else Mr. Mitchel and Mr. Thauret were both innocent. Both smiled incredulously. The former spoke :

"That is too far-fetched, Mr. Barnes. How do you suppose that he would regain possession of the gems?"

"By murdering the woman," answered the detective. Again he failed, for neither of the men winced. Mr. Barnes was foiled for the moment, but not entirely discouraged. The start which both men had made, when he suggested that the stolen property had been hidden off the train, still remained to be explained.

"Come! Come! Mr. Barnes," said Mr. Mitchel patting his shoulder familiarly, "don't let this case upset you so. When you go so far for a theory, you do not show the skill which you displayed in tracking Pettingill. Why even I can get you a better one than that."

"You must not think me quite a fool, Mr. Mitchel. If my theory seems preposterous, it does not follow that it is the only one at my command. We detectives must look at these cases from all lights. I will wager that I can tell you what your theory is?"

"Good! I am glad New York has such a clever man

to defend her. I accept your wager. Here, I will write my idea on a bit of paper. If you guess it I owe you an invitation to a good dinner." Mr. Mitchel wrote a few lines on the back of an envelope and handed it to Dora.

"You think," said Mr. Barnes, "that the thief might have simply handed the satchel and jewelry to a confederate at a station decided upon in advance."

"Bravo! Mr. Barnes," said Dora, "You *are* a great detective. You have won your wager. That is what is written here."

"I owe you a dinner Mr. Barnes, and it shall be a good one," said Mr. Mitchel.

"Would Mr. Barnes like to win another?" asked the Frenchman with slow distinctness.

"I would," said the detective sharply.

"Then I will wager with you, that if you ever clear up the mystery, you will be obliged to admit that none of the theories advanced is the correct one."

"I cannot accept that bet," said Mr. Barnes slowly, "because I am sure that we have not mentioned the true method adopted."

"Ah! You have another theory," Mr. Thauret almost sneered.

"I have and it is the correct one," retorted Mr. Barnes, "but I prefer not to disclose it."

"I think you are quite right, Mr. Barnes," said Emily. "In fact, knowing you by reputation as a man of great shrewdness, I have not thought that you were telling us your true ideas. It would have been foolish to do so."

"Perhaps, though sometimes what seems foolish, may be wise."

"Quite true. And now gentlemen, I regret the necessity of dismissing you, but I have a ball on hand for to-night, and must beg you to excuse us, that we may prepare for it. You know in the fashionable world we train for a ball, as athletes do for their sports. You will forgive my sending you away?"

This was her way and men never resented it. They simply obeyed. Mr. Barnes was delighted that both the other men would leave with him. He had prepared a trap for Mr. Mitchel, but now be would entice two birds into it.

CHAPTER VI.

MR. BARNES'S TRAP.

It must not be supposed from what has been related, that Mr. Barnes had lost any of his old time skill. That he did not yet quite understand the case upon which he was working, is little to be wondered at when it is remembered that less than two days had elapsed since the robbery had occurred, and that a great part of this time he had necessarily been absent from the city upon another case.

After his disappointment at discovering that the button which he had found was less valuable than he had at first supposed, he had decided upon a mode of procedure from which he hoped to gain much. He had seen many men flinch when brought unexpectedly into the presence of their murdered victim. He knew that many in a fit of passion, or even in cold blood, might have the nerve to take human life. Few resisted a shudder when shown the ghastly, mutilated, perhaps decomposing corpse. When he left the hotel that morning it was about ten o'clock. Whilst he had been convinced by Mr. Mitchel that the button found at the scene of the murder was not one of the original set, or rather that it could not be proven that it had been, he was

equally satisfied, that the fact that it presented a portrait of Miss Remsen was significant. Thus, after all, it was possible that Mr. Mitchel had murdered the woman, or at least he had visited the apartment. In either case, supposing that he knew the woman was dead, it would be idle to take him up three flights of stairs to confront him with the body, for that would give him ample premonition of what was about to occur, and he would readily control his countenance. This is what the detective did:

He went at once to the coroner, and told him enough to have him render his assistance. Therefore during the time which had elapsed, the coroner had impanelled a jury, taken them to the scene of the crime, and then adjourned the inquest, leaving the doctors to perform the autopsy. The body had been taken down to a room on the first floor which opened directly on the main hall. Here it was laid out upon a table, so placed that the gaping wound and now hideous face would at once meet the gaze of any one entering. The doctors had been instructed to postpone their work until the arrival of the detective. Thus Mr. Barnes knew, as he led the way down stairs, that his trap was set. As they reached the main hall, he spoke:

"Gentlemen, I am about to ask a favor of you. You were both on the train when the robbery was committed. There is a question in relation to it which I should like to ask both of you, and hear each answer separately. Would you oblige me?"

"With pleasure," said the Frenchman.

"I have already told you that you may ask me any questions," said Mr. Mitchel.

"Thank you." Turning to the hall-boy, who of course had been taught his part, he continued: "Can we find a room where we can talk privately for a few minutes?"

"Yes sir; step this way," and the boy led them towards the one where the corpse lay.

"Mr. Mitchel," said Mr. Barnes, "will you wait a few minutes? I will not detain you long." Mr. Mitchel bowed, and the Frenchman followed the detective into the room, the boy closing the door after them. Nothing was to be seen save the table bearing the body, the doctors being hidden in a room beyond. Mr. Barnes stopped near the corpse and simply gazed steadfastly at Mr. Thauret, who in turn looked intently at the murdered woman. Not a muscle moved to show any agitation. Mr. Barnes waited; but apparently nothing was to happen; yet he was determined that the other should speak first, that he might draw some deduction from his words. Therefore he maintained a stolid silence. Two minutes passed, which seemed an age, and then the Frenchman gave the detective a genuine surprise. Looking him straight in the eyes he said in the coolest tones imaginable:

"How did you discover that I am a physician?"

"I don't understand you," said Mr. Barnes, not knowing what the man was aiming at.

"Mr. Barnes, you brought me into this room saying that you wished to ask me a question. When I entered and

saw this corpse, I knew at once that your pretended questioning was but a subterfuge. I wondered why you brought me in here, and whilst thinking it out, I kept silent. So have you. Very good. All I can make of it is, that this woman having been murdered, and knowing that I am a physician, you wished an expert opinion in the case. I wondered how you had discovered that I have a medical education, and so I asked you the question. Do I make myself plain?"

"Quite so," said the detective, coldly, and much disappointed. "My reply must be that I did not know you to be a physician, and that I did bring you in here to ask a question."

"Indeed! Then what is it?"

"I wish you to tell me who this woman is."

"You overrate my ability. I never saw the woman before. Is there anything more you wish to say?"

"Nothing."

"Then I will wish you good-morning." With a polite bow, and drawing on his glove, Mr. Thauret started to leave the room. Mr. Barnes quickly stepped in front of him, determined that he should not have a chance to warn Mr. Mitchel. Opening the door, he then let him pass, thus keeping his eyes on the two others. Mr. Thauret bowed formally to Mr. Mitchel and passed out. Then the latter followed Mr. Barnes into the presence of the dead woman. If Mr. Thauret was undisturbed at the sight which met him, it was not so with Mr. Mitchel. He had scarcely observed what was before him, than with an

ejaculation of horror he stepped closer to the corpse and exclaimed :

"My God, Mr. Barnes, what does this mean?"

"What does what mean?" said Mr. Barnes, quietly.

The two men stared at one another a few moments, when Mr. Mitchel, suddenly lowering his eyes said, "I'm a fool," and once more turned to look at the corpse. Presently he turned and said, with all of his old time composure :

"You said you wished to ask me a question! What is it?"

"I wish you to tell me who this woman is?"

"Was, I suppose you mean. She was Rose Mitchel."

"Ah! Did you know her?"

"I agreed to answer but one question. I have done so."

"You have admitted that you knew her."

"You will find it difficult to prove that."

"Oh, shall I? I have witnesses. Gentlemen, please come forward." A door at the farther end of the room opened, and two physicians entered. The detective continued, "What have you to say now?"

"That I am most profoundly indebted to you for having enabled me to prove what has happened, and also that you have so soon let me know that we are not alone." Mr. Barnes bit his lip at this taunt, and Mr. Mitchel, turning to the doctors, continued, "Gentlemen, I am delighted to know that you have overheard what has occurred. You may be called upon to give testimony. If you will remember, I think that you will admit that Mr. Barnes

asked me who this woman is. Correcting his grammar I replied, 'She was Rose Mitchel.' Am I accurate?"

"Quite so," said one of the doctors.

"Mr. Barnes claims that I have admitted that I knew the woman. I claim that I have merely admitted that I knew her name, which is a very different thing."

"You admitted more than that," said the detective testily, "for you must have known more than her name to be able to give a name to this dead body."

"You are quite right, Mr. Barnes, I must also have known her face. In the same way I know both name and face of Lillian Russell. Were I to identify her dead body, would that prove that I was a personal acquaintance?"

"Certainly not, but you cannot claim that this woman was known to you in that way, for she was not a public character."

"How do you know that?"

"Well then, was she?"

"That is another question, and I decline to answer it, at least before witnesses. If you will walk with me as far as my hotel I will do the best I can to explain to you how I could identify this corpse without having been acquainted with the woman herself."

"Of course I will go with you, for explain this you must"; and together the two men left the building.

They walked across to Fifth Avenue and down that thoroughfare for several blocks in silence. Mr. Mitchel was evidently thinking over the position in which he

found himself, and Mr. Barnes was satisfied not to hasten the explanation. He thus gave himself time to make a few mental notes, which if written down would have read as follows:

"Why did both of these men start when I said that the jewels were hidden off the train. It might be because both knew that to be a fact. If a fact, Thauret might have known it, because he himself may be the thief. In that case, either Mitchel is an accomplice, or he saw the other man hide the satchel at some station. Could Mitchel himself have hidden the satchel? How could he have done so when I watched his section all night, unless of course I fell asleep, which is not probable. It follows then that I must discover what acquaintanceship exists between these men, in order to determine whether they are in league together.

"Next, as to the murder. It is odd to find both men possessing the means of admittance to the house. It is odd that both were undisturbed and plainly incredulous when I suggested that the woman might have been murdered to obtain the jewels. If Thauret killed the woman his demeanor in the presence of the corpse was simply miraculous. He showed not the least agitation. On the other hand he admitted that he has a medical education. Physicians are less excited by cadavers, and what is more significant, a physician would know how to find the jugular vein with a pen-knife. Still it is not difficult to sever that vessel without special knowledge. As to Mitchel, his behavior is more mysterious. Had he committed the

crime, knowing his extraordinary ability to control his emotions, I had a right to expect him to be calm before the corpse. Yet he was much excited, and went towards the body for a closer scrutiny. Murderers usually shrink away from their victims. In spite of that he gave the woman's name, and it tallies with that which she herself had claimed. Now, if he was willing to tell me the name, and if he committed the crime, why did he remove the names from all the garments? Why, unless Rose Mitchel is an alias, and the real name is thus kept secret? I may ask him some of these questions."

At this point Mr. Mitchel addressed his companion:

"Mr. Barnes, I should like to know of what you have been thinking as we walked, and I suppose you have a similar curiosity regarding my own thoughts. I mean to gratify you. I have been endeavoring to view my own position from your point of view, to guess what your deductions are from my behavior in the presence of that dead woman."

"I cannot give you my deductions," said Mr. Barnes, "for the simple reason that I have adopted none as yet. It has always been my practice to avoid deciding upon a theory too early. A detective with a theory will invariably be tempted to work to prove his assumption. I work to discover the truth. Therefore I avoid theories."

"Good! I see that my opinion of detectives, as expressed in the conversation which you overheard, must be modified. I still think I am right in the main, but you are an exception to the general rule."

"Mr. Mitchel, I don't care for compliments. You are at present in a very suspicious position. You said you could explain how you were able to identify that woman."

"I will do so. First let me state that I never saw her but once before in my life. The story is very short. I have been in this city less than two years. I became engaged to Miss Remsen last winter. About a month later I received a letter signed Rose Mitchel, which informed me that the writer could divulge a secret in relation to my family which would cause Miss Remsen to break with me. A price was named for silence, and a photograph enclosed that I might be able to recognize the woman, for she boldly announced that she would call in person for the money. She did so, and I have never seen her again till to-day."

"Can you prove this story?"

"I will show you the letter and the photograph if you will come with me to the Garfield Safety Vaults."

"I will go with you at once. Did you pay the money demanded?"

"I did."

"Do you not know that it is suspicious for a man to submit to blackmail? It tends to prove that he is in the blackmailer's power."

"That is correct. I was in this woman's power."

"That is a serious admission, now that she has been murdered."

"I know it. But here we are at the vaults."

The two men entered the building, and Mr. Mitchel

obtained the key to his compartment. He never took it away from the place, for he thought it safer in the keeping of the officers of the vaults. Descending into the great strong room, he took a tin box from his drawer, and then went into a little private room provided with a table and chairs. Opening the box he took out several packages which he laid on one side. Amongst these the detective was amazed to see a red Russia-leather case bound around with a strap, upon which appeared the name MITCHEL, in gold letters. Could it be possible that this was the case containing the missing jewels.

"Ah! Here it is," said Mr. Mitchel. "Here is the photograph." He handed it to Mr. Barnes, who saw at once that it was the picture of the dead woman. "And here is the letter. Shall I read it to you?" Mr. Barnes assented with a nod. His thoughts were mainly upon the red leather case. Mr. Mitchel read aloud:

"MR. R. MITCHEL,

"DEAR SIR:

"You will be surprised to receive this from one, of whom perhaps you know little, but who knows much concerning your family. So much, that were she to tell all she knows, your high-toned sweetheart would send you adrift in a jiffy. Some say that silence is golden. So it must be in this case. If you wish me to keep silent, you must be ready to pay me ten thousand dollars on Thursday night, when I shall call for it. I send my photograph, that you may know I am the writer when I call. You

see I am not afraid to do this, because if you call in the police, I will simply tell my story and you will be ruined. I may go to jail, but that does not worry me much, as there are worse places. So be ready to receive me on Thursday night. Yours truly,

"ROSE MITCHEL."

Mr. Mitchel handed the above to Mr. Barnes, who read it over carefully, examining the envelope and postmark, both of which proved that the letter was genuine and a year old.

"Did you give her the amount demanded?" asked Mr. Barnes.

"I must explain what I did. When I received that letter, it was plain that there would be nothing to lose by receiving the woman and hearing her story. I determined not to give her any money; therefore, when she called, of course I did not have any such sum. After listening to her I changed my mind. I found that, through certain papers which she had, and which she did not hesitate to show me, she would be able to ventilate a scandal which might result just as she adroitly prophesied. I mean in the rupture of my engagement. Naturally I wished to avoid that. When I told her that she should have the money if she would call again, she became furious. Said I had tricked her, and now wanted a chance to hand her over to the police, etc. I saw that I must settle with her at once, and did so on these terms. I agreed to give her cash enough to go to Europe, and the balance in jewels."

"In jewels?" cried Mr. Barnes, startled.

"Yes, in jewels. You are surprised; but that is because you do not know my hobby. I am a collector of jewels. I have half a million dollars' worth in these vaults. Therefore, whilst I had no such amount in cash as ten thousand dollars, I could easily give her three diamond rings, which I did, with a letter to a Paris jeweller, who would purchase them from her. Thus was I rid of the woman, part of the agreement being that she should never return."

"Mr. Mitchel, a man of your intelligence must have known that such promises are not kept by that class of people."

"True, but I obtained from her all the documentary evidence which she had, so that I rendered her powerless to annoy me further. You said awhile ago that it was a serious admission for me to make that I was in this woman's power. I suppose you meant that such a fact supplied a motive for this murder. Now you see that this is not true since I can prove that I released myself from that position a year ago."

"How can you prove that?"

"I have the woman's receipt, in which she states that for the sum of ten thousand dollars or its equivalent, she delivers to me family documents, etc."

"Have you the documents still?"

"I prefer not to reply to that question."

"Very good, but answer me this one. Where did you obtain this leather case, and what does it contain?" As

he said this the detective picked up the case and held it before Mr. Mitchel's eyes. That gentleman was evidently confused for a moment, but finally answered:

"It contains some jewels."

"Jewels? That is what I thought. May I examine them?"

"Not with my permission."

"Then I must do so without," and with a quick movement the case lay open on the table. It was lined with black satin, and contained gems similar to those described in the paper found in the dead woman's pocket. What seemed more important however, was a piece of writing-paper upon which Mr. Barnes found an exact copy of the list and description which he had in his pocket. The detective noticed with astonishment that though Mr. Mitchel had refused to permit this examination of the contents of the case, he made no effort to prevent it, and now sat back looking on in the most unconcerned way.

"Mr. Mitchel," said Mr. Barnes, "why did you object to my looking into this case?"

"I never show my jewels to—strangers. It is wrong to tempt people."

"You are impertinent, sir! What do you mean?"

"I mean that I regulate my life by rule. This is one of my rules, and though I do not doubt your honesty, you are a stranger to me and so come within the operation of my rule."

"Your cool impudence will not avail you in this instance. These are the stolen jewels."

"Indeed! Do you discover that, as you claim to have detected the thief, simply by looking at them?" Mr. Mitchel assumed that sarcastic tone which had several times irritated the detective.

"Have done with child's play," said Mr. Barnes. "I have a list of the lost jewels, and this case with its contents accurately matches the description. What is more, this list in your possession, is the fac-simile, of the one which I have in my pocket."

"Ah! Now we come to tangible facts and leave the realm of psychology," said Mr. Mitchel leaning forward, with evident interest. "Let me understand this. You have a list of the stolen jewels. That paper is a fac-simile of this one here. The description too tallies with the case and jewels. Is that right?"

"That is quite right. Now can your remarkable inventive faculty fashion a story to meet this emergency?"

"Mr. Barnes, you do me an injustice. I am no romancer. That is the difference between myself and the criminal class, with which you deal. Those poor devils commit a crime and depend upon a sequence of lies to clear themselves. On the contrary I follow this rule: 'Refuse to answer all questions, or else answer truthfully.' Now in this case there are some points, as puzzling to me as to yourself. Them I shall not attempt to explain. One of them is how you can possibly have a duplicate list of my jewels, for these are mine I assure you."

"Here is the list," said the detective, taking it from his pocket and comparing it with the other; "and by heavens," he continued "the writing is the same."

"That is interesting, let me look," said Mr. Mitchel. With which he arose, walked around to the other side of the table and stood leaning over the detective. "You see, I do not ask you to let me take your paper from you. You might suspect that I would destroy it." Mr. Barnes handed both papers to him without a word. Mr. Mitchel bowed as he took them and returned to his seat. After a moment's careful examination he handed them back saying:

"I agree with you, Mr. Barnes. The writing is the same. What deduction do you draw from that fact?"

"What deduction! Why I found this description of the stolen jewels in the pocket of a dress belonging to Rose Mitchel."

"What? Do you mean to say that she was the woman who was robbed?" The blank amazement upon Mr. Mitchel's face disconcerted Mr Barnes, for if he did not know this, the mystery seemed deeper than ever.

"Do you mean that you did not know it?" asked Mr. Barnes.

"How should I know it?"

This caused a silence. Both men stopped a moment to consider the situation. At length Mr. Barnes said coldly:

"Mr. Mitchel, I am under the painful necessity of placing you under arrest."

"Upon what charge?"

"Upon the charge of having stolen jewels, and perhaps of having murdered Rose Mitchel."

"Are you in a hurry to take me with you?" asked Mr. Mitchel coolly.

"Why do you ask?"

"Because if not, I should like to ask you one or two questions."

"You may do so."

"First, then, as the robbery was committed on a moving train, will you tell me how you suppose it to have been accomplished, since the passengers were searched?" Mr. Barnes had his own idea on this subject which he did not choose to tell. He thought it well, however, to pretend that he had still another theory. At least he could observe how Mr. Mitchel received it.

"As you say, all were searched. The first was Mr. Thauret. Nothing was found. Let us suppose a case. This man Thauret was in the same carriage with the woman Rose Mitchel. When the train stopped at New Haven, suppose that he took the satchel, left the train and passed it to you through the window of your section, thinking that only his carriage would be searched. After his own examination, he left the train at Stamford. Why may he not have tapped upon your window and have received back the satchel?"

"That would make him my accomplice. You are wrong. I do not know the man at all."

"You admitted having met him when Miss Dora Remsen introduced him to you."

"Once only. At a gaming table. That is why I was displeased to see him in the home of my intended. Passing the robbery then, for despite my denial you may think your explanation correct, and a jury might agree with you, let us come to the murder. Do you suppose a man would make a wager to commit a crime, and then go to the extreme of killing a woman."

"I do not! But having committed the robbery, and then having discovered that this woman, who you say has blackmailed you, had actually taken an apartment in the same building with your affianced, you may have gone there to urge her to leave, and have killed her to save yourself."

"Plainly you do not know me. There is one point in what you say which is interesting. Did I understand that this woman had an apartment in the Thirtieth Street building."

"Certainly, and you knew it."

"You are mistaken. Let us return to the jewels. You think that these are the missing gems. If I prove to the contrary, will you agree not to place me under arrest?"

"With pleasure," said the detective, feeling safe in the idea that what Mr. Mitchel offered to do was an impossibility.

"Thank you. That gives me my freedom, in exchange for which courtesy I promise you all the assistance in my power in finding the murderer." Saying which Mr. Mitchel touched an electric-button and when it was answered sent a message up-stairs asking Mr. Charles to

come down. In a few moments, that gentleman appeared.

"Mr. Charles," said Mr. Mitchel, "would it be possible for me to enter these vaults without your knowledge?"

"It would be impossible for any one to enter here without my knowledge," said Mr. Charles.

"You keep my key, do you not?"

"Yes, sir."

"Have I ever taken it out of this building."

"No, sir."

"Then you think it impossible that I should have been able to have a duplicate key, and to have entered here without your knowledge?"

"An utter impossibility, sir."

"Can you remember when I was here last?"

"Certainly. It was about two weeks ago, when you told me that you were going to Boston."

"Thank you very much, Mr. Charles. That is all." Mr. Charles retired and Mr. Mitchel looked at Mr. Barnes with a smile, saying:

"You see you are wrong again. The jewels were stolen yesterday morning, and I have not been to this place since, and therefore could not have placed them in this box. Are you satisfied?"

"No. If you were able to commit the robbery on the train, whilst I watched your section all night, and to have succeeded in getting the jewels away although you were searched, you are ingenious enough to have found a way of getting here without the knowledge of Mr. Charles.

Or, he may be paid to lie for you. I feel too sure that these are the gems, to be so readily convinced to the contrary."

"So you did watch me that night. Well, I am sorry you had so much trouble. I must give you further proof? Very good. Examine these." He took out a package of letters and from them extracted a bill-of-sale, dated five years previous, in which was once more an accurate description of the jewels and case. In addition there was pinned to it a receipt from the New York Custom House for the duties paid, which paper was also dated back. This was evidence which Mr. Barnes could not refute. Plainly this particular set of jewels belonged to Mr. Mitchel.

"That is sufficient. It would be folly to arrest you when you could show those documents to any judge and be released. At the same time, I shall not forget the coincidence of these two lists, and that one of the button."

"By the way, Mr. Barnes, would you mind saying where you found that button?"

"In the room where the woman was murdered."

"No wonder you valued it. I am surprised that you should have presented it to Miss Remsen." There was a twinkle in Mr. Mitchel's eye which annoyed Mr. Barnes, but he made no reply. Mr. Mitchel continued:

"In consideration of your not placing me under arrest, Mr. Barnes, I will give you a hint. I made that wager with my friend Randolph yesterday morning, that is to

say December 2d. I have until January 2d, to commit the crime about which the bet was made. Should you come to the conclusion that I am not guilty of either of those now engaging your attention, it might enter your head that I still have a crime on hand, and it might pay you to watch me. Do you catch the idea?"

"There is little danger of your committing any crime during the next month without my knowing of it," said Mr. Barnes.

"Now let us change the subject. Do you see this ruby?" taking a large ruby from the case before them. "I am thinking of having it set as a present to Miss Remsen. Will she not be envied when she wears it?"

CHAPTER VII.

MR. RANDOLPH HAS A FIGHT WITH HIS CONSCIENCE.

Upon leaving the vaults Mr. Mitchel and the detective parted company, the former going down to Tiffany's where he left the ruby with instructions as to how he wished it set. On the following morning Wilson's report to Mr. Barnes stated that Mr. Mitchel had spent the afternoon at the Union League Club, and had accompanied his *fiancée* to a private ball in the evening.

On the morning of the 5th, as Mr. Mitchel was dressing, a card was brought to him which bore the name of his friend, Mr. Randolph, and that gentleman a few minutes later entered. Mr. Mitchel was cordial in his greeting and extended his hand, but Mr. Randoph refused it saying:

"Excuse me, Mitchel, but I have come to see you about that wager I was stupid enough to make with you."

"Well, what of it!"

"I did not suppose that you would go so far."

"So far as what?"

"Why have n't you read the papers?"

"No! I never do! I am above that class of literature."

"Then with your permission I will read one to you."

"Go ahead, I am all attention." Mr. Mitchel seated himself in his most comfortable armchair, and Mr. Randolph without removing his overcoat, sat in another. Taking a morning paper from his pocket he read the following:

"The inquest upon the body of the mysterious woman found murdered in the Thirtieth Street apartment-house was resumed yesterday at the coroner's office. Mr. Barnes, the well-known detective, testified that he had been upon the Boston Express at the time of the robbery of the jewels. That he had an interview with the woman at which she gave the name Rose Mitchel, and made an appointment with him at her residence. He called at the time agreed upon, nine o'clock on the morning of the 3d, and discovered her lying in bed with her throat cut. One singular fact brought out by the detective's testimony is that the woman's name had been deliberately cut from every garment. This may indicate that Rose Mitchel is an assumed name.

"The doctors who performed the autopsy, declare it as their opinion that the woman was attacked whilst she slept. Otherwise there would have been more blood stains found, as the jugular vein and carotid artery were both cut. They think that the assassin used an ordinary pocket knife, because the wound though deep, is not very large.

"A curious story was obtained from the janitor. The woman Mitchel had been in the house about three weeks. She was not a tenant, but occupied the apartments of

Mr. and Mrs. Comstock, who are absent in Europe. The woman gave him a letter purporting to be written by Mrs. Comstock, instructing the janitor to allow the bearer to occupy the apartment until suited elsewhere, and also asking that the janitor's wife would see that she had proper attendance. The janitor did not doubt the authenticity of the letter, but it now appears from the testimony of a relative of the Comstocks, who is well acquainted with Mrs. Comstock's writing, that this letter is a forgery.

"After a little further evidence of no special importance the inquest was adjourned until to-day. It is plain that the detectives are all at sea in this case. A startling piece of evidence has now been obtained by a reporter which may serve as a clue. It is no less than the discovery of the lost jewels. It will be remembered that Mr. Barnes was on the train, and ordered that the passengers should be searched. Nothing was found, from which it seemed safe to presume that there were two persons connected with the theft. One of these secured the plunder and handed it through a window of the car to his accomplice outside. A reporter went over the route yesterday, beginning his investigation in New Haven. He went the rounds of the hotels, endeavoring to discover if any suspicious person had been noticed in the city. At one of the last which he visited, which is about five minutes walk from the railroad depot, the clerk remembered a man who did act strangely. It seems that this man came into the hotel at about noon on the third, registered, asked that his satchel should be placed in the safe, went out and had not

returned since. The reporter at once guessed that this was the missing satchel, and so stating, the chief of police was sent for, and in his presence it was opened. In it was found a red Russia leather case containing unset jewels of such size and lustre that one can well believe that they are worth a hundred thousand dollars as claimed. That these are the missing gems is plainly indicated by the fact that the jewel-case has the name of MITCHEL stamped upon it. Unfortunately there was nothing about the satchel, or in it, which gives any clue to the thief himself. The clerk, however, remembers him distinctly, and from his description the detectives hope soon to have him under lock and key."

"What have you to say to that, Mitchel?"

"Why, it is just that kind of thing that made me give up reading the newspapers. A sensational description of a mysterious robbery and murder. Yet if one reads the papers he must submit to that almost every day."

"Do you mean that this particular case has no interest to you?"

"Why should it interest me. Because I happened to be on the train and was compelled to submit to being searched by an order from a blundering detective?"

"There is more reason than that for attracting your attention. Any man with a grain of sense, and with the knowledge of your wager, must see your hand in this?"

"In which, the robbery, or the murder?"

"My God, I don't know. You and I have been the best of friends ever since we first met. I have stood by

you and believed in you in spite of all that your enemies have said against you. But now——"

"Well?"

"Well, I don't know what to think. You bet me that you would commit a crime. In a few hours there is a robbery, and a little later a woman is killed in the very house where the Remsens lived. It is known,—there is another account in another paper here—it is known that you were in that house for an hour, after 11:30 at night, and that whilst you were there a woman was heard to scream from that apartment where the corpse was found. Then here they find the jewels, and the case had your name on it."

"The woman's name you mean. The paper made that deduction I think."

"That is true. I did not think of that. Of course it was her name, but don't you see I am all muddled up and excited. I came here to ask you to say outright that you have had nothing to do with this thing."

"That is impossible."

"What, you refuse? You will not claim that you are innocent? Then you practically admit that you are guilty!"

"I do not. I neither deny nor admit anything. Do you remember our wager? I told you then that this crisis would arise. That you would hear of some crime and come to ask me about it. I warned you that I would refuse to enlighten you. I simply keep my word."

This was followed by a silence. Mr. Randolph seemed much disturbed. Jamming his hands into his pockets he

went and looked out of the window. Mr. Mitchel looked at him for some minutes with a smile of amusement hovering about his lips. Suddenly he said:

"Randolph, does your conscience trouble you?"

"Most decidedly!" answered his companion sharply, turning towards him.

"Why not go and unburden your soul to the police?"

"I think it is my duty to do so. But I feel like a coward at the idea. It seems like betraying a friend."

"Ah! You still count me your friend. Then, my dear friend, for I assure you I value your good will, I will show you how to act so as to satisfy your conscience, and yet not injure me."

"I wish to heaven you would."

"Nothing easier. Go to Mr. Barnes and make a clean breast of all that you know."

"But that is betraying you to the police."

"No; Mr. Barnes is not the police—he is only a private detective. If you remember, he is the very one about whom we were talking when the wager was made. You were boasting of his skill. It should satisfy you then to have him on my track, and it will satisfy me, if you agree to talk with no other. Is it a bargain?"

"Yes, since you are willing. I must tell some one in authority. It is impossible for me to withhold what may be the means of detecting a criminal."

Mr. Randolph, upon leaving the hotel, went in search of Mr. Barnes. Meanwhile that gentleman was holding a conversation with Wilson.

"You say," said the detective, "that Mr. Mitchel gave you the slip again yesterday afternoon?"

"Yes. He doubled so often on his tracks on the elevated road that at last he eluded me, getting on a train which I failed to board. You see it was impossible to tell, till the moment of starting, whether he would take a train or not. He would mix with the crowd and seem anxious to get on, and then at the last moment step back. I had to imitate him at the other end of the coach, and finally he got on just as the guard at my end slammed the gates."

"This was at Forty-second Street?"

"Yes. He took the down train."

"Did he notice you in any way?"

"I suppose so; but no one would have guessed it. He appeared entirely ignorant of the fact that he was followed, so far as watching me was concerned."

"You are not to blame. Go back to his hotel, and do the best you can. Leave the rest to me. I will discover where it is he goes on these mysterious trips."

Left to himself Mr. Barnes's thoughts took this form:

"Wilson is no match for Mr. Mitchel, that is evident. I wonder whether there is any real object in this game of hide and seek; or whether it is simply an intimation to me that he cannot be shadowed? If the latter—well, we shall see. Now let me think about those jewels found in New Haven. They tally exactly with the description. Their discovery complicates the case once more. I had almost concluded that those in the safety vaults were the ones stolen, and that as they really belong to Mr. Mitchel,

as proven by his receipts, he stole them to win his wager. In this way he ran no risk, since, if the crime were brought home to him, he could not be imprisoned, though he would lose the bet. Now here is another set, evidently the right ones. Mr. Mitchel was plainly surprised at sight of the list which I found. I am sure he did not know of its existence. Therefore he may equally as well have known nothing about this duplicate set of jewels. In that case the occurrence of the train robbery on the very night of the wager, may be simply a coincidence. He says that the dead woman was a blackmailer, and that he gave her the address of his Paris jeweller. May he not have bought his set from that very man, and may not this woman have stolen the duplicate set recently, and brought them to this country? Plainly the Paris jeweller must be looked up. I have his name which I copied from the bill of sale. If this line of argument is true, some one has followed this woman from France, in order to rob her, after allowing her to accomplish the risky business of smuggling. Is that person our friend Thauret? Along this line of argument we arrive at the conclusion that Mr. Mitchel has not yet committed his crime. He hinted that I should remember this if I should exculpate him from those already committed. But do I? Why did he show me that ruby and say that he meant to present it to his sweetheart? Will he give it to her, and then rob her of it? If so, will she be in the plot, and make a hue and cry, so that the papers may make a noise? That was a part of the agreement in making his bet. But after all,

what about that button? No explanation explains, which does not throw a light upon that."

Here Mr. Barnes was interrupted by the announcement that Mr. Randolph wished to speak with him. It must be remembered that Mr. Randolph was not aware of the fact that the conversation in the sleeping-car had been overheard. Brought face to face with Mr. Barnes he felt confused, and hesitated.

"Mr. Randolph, I believe," said the detective, glancing at the card which had been sent in. "Be seated. You have come to see me about this Mitchel case?" The rising inflection with which the last word was spoken seemed almost unnecessary to Mr. Randolph. For if the man could ask such a question, he might as well have made it a positive statement. This assumption of knowledge made him more than ever confident of the skill of detectives, and especially of the one before him.

"You know that?" said he. "Would you mind telling me how?"

"We detectives are supposed to know everything, are we not?" This was said with an affable smile, but the answer plainly indicated that Mr. Barnes preferred not to be interrogated. Mr. Randolph therefore concluded to hurry through with his unpleasant business.

"Mr. Barnes, I have a confession to make, and——"

"I must interrupt you, to remind you that whatever you say is unsolicited, and that if you incriminate yourself, the evidence will be used against you."

"Thank you for your warning, but I have come here

that I may not be incriminated. The facts in brief are simply these." Then he narrated as accurately as he could recall them, all the circumstances in connection with the wager. Mr. Barnes listened as though it was all a new story to him. He even jotted down a few notes on a bit of paper as though for reference. At the conclusion he said:

"This is a most astounding tale, Mr. Randolph. It is very difficult to believe that a man like Mr. Mitchel, who certainly seems to be a gentleman, would undertake to become a criminal simply to win a sum of money. Now you must have been thinking this over, and if so, you have some explanation to offer. Would you mind telling it to me?"

"I should be glad to do so." Mr. Randolph spoke eagerly. In his heart he was fond of his friend, and therefore his theory was one which in a measure would excuse him. He was delighted to have the chance of confiding his views to the detective. "You see," he continued, "it is one of the most difficult things in the world to say who is, and who is not perfectly sane. Some experts contend that nine tenths of the people in the world are affected by mania in some form or other. I hold that any man who makes a collection of any kind of things, using them for other than their legitimate uses, is in a measure insane."

"Do you mean legally insane? That is to say irresponsible?"

"As to responsibility, I cannot say. But I think such a

mania might tempt a man to an illegal act. I must explain my idea further. Postage stamps undoubtedly have a very important value. One who collects them after they have been cancelled, paying many times their face value for them, is in my opinion somewhat crazy, since he pays a fictitious price for what has no intrinsic value."

"You might say the same thing of paintings. The intrinsic value represented in canvas and oil is little, yet thousands of dollars are paid for pictures."

"That, too, is an insanity, one of course which cannot be indulged in by any save the rich. But it is not the same as with the old stamp craze. Pictures remind us of nature, and appeal to the senses of all mankind, by recalling recollections brought into being by the scene presented. There is therefore a legitimate use for paintings, and a reasonable price as compensation for the work and genius of the artist is perhaps permissible. But should a man pay a fortune for a single canvas and then hang it in a room in his own house where it will be seen by few save himself, that man I should consider demented. So with jewels——"

"Ah! What of them?"

"Jewels have a market value, and a place in the world. But when a man goes about buying up every magnificent specimen that can be found, and then locks his treasures up in a safe, he is simply a crazy man pure and simple."

"What has all this to do with the case in hand?"

"Everything. My friend is a crank on the subject of jewels. Sensible, and entertaining on any other topic, if

you mention the name of any kind of jewel, he is off in a minute, giving a long history of this or that celebrated stone. His especial craze in this connection, is to relate the crimes that have surrounded every stone of any great price. He has made my blood curdle at his ghastly tales of cruel murder, committed to gain possession of diamonds and rubies."

"Then your conclusion is, that by filling his mind with such thoughts he may have accustomed himself to the idea of crime in connection with jewels?"

"Exactly. The worst of it is, that we may become habituated to anything. For instance, all ordinary men are abashed in the presence of the dead. No matter how strong-minded a man may be, or how much he may scoff at the idea of ghosts and the like, he will prefer company if he must sit up with a corpse. More than that, the slightest sound in the room, as the moving of the ice in the ice box, will cause a shiver to pass through him. Yet physicians who study frequently in the dissecting-room, come to have that contempt of a dead body that a butcher has for the meat which he sells."

"Your argument is not bad, Mr. Randolph. It is not impossible that your friend might be generous and gentle, and yet with a mania for the possession of jewels, and with the knowledge of all the crimes that have been committed to gain them, the temptation to kill or steal would perhaps become over-powering, where his passion sees an opportunity to be satisfied. It is an odd world."

"Do you think, that in a case of that kind, the man

would be excusable on the plea of mania? Legally I mean?"

"Well no, I do not! Psychologically I admit that you may be correct, and I can sympathize with a man who became a criminal in such a way. But legally, he would be culpable. At least I think so. The question to be answered is, did your friend steal those jewels? You slept with him that night, what do you think?"

"I don't know what to think. He could not have left the berth without climbing over me, and though I sleep soundly, that ought to have awakened me. Then besides, if he did get out and take the things, where could he have hidden them, and how did they get to New Haven? By the way, I suppose you have the description of the man who left the satchel at the hotel? Does it tally with that of my friend?"

"I can't say. It is rather vague. The clerk says the man was of medium size, with red hair and beard, whilst the porter who saw him also, is equally positive that he had black hair and no beard. The last fits Mr. Mitchel better than the first, but it is a description which would do as well for a thousand men found in a walk along Broadway."

"I almost think that after all the thief is some one else."

"Let us hope so, Mr. Randolph. I will say this much, if there is any comfort in it for you. At present there is not enough evidence against him to warrant his arrest."

The detective said this with a purpose. By relieving

this man's mind, he hoped to make him more communicative. After a pause he asked:

"You have known Mr. Mitchel for a number of years, I believe?"

"No, not more than a year and a half. He has not been in New York two years."

"Oh! I see. A Boston man?"

"No, I think he came from New Orleans."

A curious sensation passed over Mr. Barnes. There is a superstitious belief, much esteemed by many, that a shudder or chill of this character means that some one is walking over the spot where the person affected is to be buried. Therefore an uncanny thought accompanies it. With Mr. Barnes it is different. He is free from all such notions, yet insensibly he is moved when this occurs to him, because it has so often happened that at the time he just hit upon a clew. Therefore he stopped to consider. All that Mr. Randolph had said was that Mr. Mitchel, he thought, had come from New Orleans. In a moment it flashed across Mr. Barnes's mind that the dead woman had told him that she had lived in New Orleans. Was there any significance in this fact? Did the man and the woman know each other in the southern city?

"How do you know that he is a Southerner?" asked Mr. Barnes.

"Oh! That was easily discovered by his accent," replied Mr. Randolph. "Besides he claims to be from the South, though I think he is rather inclined not to speak

of his home. I have an indistinct recollection of his telling me once that he was born in New Orleans and that he had some painful recollection of the place. That is the only time that he ever alluded to it, however."

"I would like to ask you a question about another man, Mr. Randolph. I wonder whether you have met him. His name is Thauret?"

"Alphonse Thauret? Yes I know him, and I do not like him."

"Why not?"

"I don't exactly know. Perhaps it is only a prejudice. Still we are apt to form quick estimates of men, and I have distrusted this man from the first instant that I met him."

"Distrusted him?"

"Yes. I may be entirely wrong, and perhaps I should not tell you the story, but I will do so. It was at one of my clubs about two weeks ago. Some gentlemen were playing whist, and this Thauret was of the number. Others were looking on. The stakes were small, still there was money up. Thauret and his partner seemed to have a great deal of luck. Ordinarily of course, two packs are used, but for some reason there was but one that night, so that the bottom card would be the trump. Now it is pretty well known, that as the cards run in whist, each trick containing four of a suit mainly, it is a mathematical certainty that if the pack is shuffled twice only, and the dealer is skilful enough to handle the pack so that the two halves split each other exactly both

times, the result will be that the majority of trumps will go to himself and partner. Cutting does not alter this fact at all. Now what I observed was, that Thauret dealt in that way every time. He and his partner won about two hundred dollars during the evening. I think he cheated."

"Who was his partner?"

"I do not know."

"Was Mr. Mitchel present that night?"

"Yes, and agreed with me that the man is a card sharp. Yet of course we may be doing him an injustice. After all, we only know that he shuffled his cards twice, and played in good luck. I have since seem him lose at the same game."

"Well, I am much indebted to you, Mr. Randolph, for the information which you have given me. I will say that if I can prove that your friend had no hand in this affair I shall be most happy."

The detective arose and Mr. Randolph accepted the action as a hint that he was dismissed. After his departure Mr. Barnes sat down again. In his mind he wondered whether this partner in the card game might have been the accomplice of Thauret in the jewel robbery, and whether he was the man who left the jewels in the hotel at New Haven. Why he should have done so however, was a mystery.

A few minutes later Mr. Barnes left the building, and walked rapidly towards Third Avenue, where he took the elevated road, getting out at Seventy-sixth Street.

Going eastward a few houses he rang the bell of one, and was shown into a modestly-furnished parlor. A few minutes later a comely young woman of about twenty-four or five entered. The two talked together in low tones for some time, and then the girl left the room returning in street attire. Together they left the house.

Four days later, Mr. Barnes received a note which simply said, "Come up." He seemed to understand it, however, and was quickly on his way to the house on Seventy-sixth Street. Once more the girl joined him in the parlor.

"Well," said Mr. Barnes, "have you succeeded?"

"Why, of course," replied the girl. "You never knew me to make a failure, did you? You don't class me with Wilson, I hope?"

"Never mind about Wilson; tell me your story."

"Very good. Don't be impatient. You know me, I take my own way of doing things. Well, you left me in Madison Square Park. I sat on a bench and watched Wilson. Two hours later a man came out of the hotel and Wilson followed him. It made me laugh to see the gawk skulking along in the rear. He's no artist. Why, any booby could tell in a minute that he was on the trail."

"I told you to omit remarks about Wilson."

"I know, but I choose to tell you about him, because I make you appreciate me more. So there he was chasing after your man Mitchel. You see I have found out his name. You didn't tell me, but that could not trouble me long, you know. It was real fun. One minute Wilson would

be actually running to keep up, and all of a sudden Mitchel would stop so short, that Wilson would almost bump into him. Of course he knows Wilson by this time, and just has fun with him. I wanted to get one good square look at him myself. I jumped on a car and reached Third Avenue ahead of them. I ran upstairs to the platform of the elevated station, and hid in the waiting-room. Soon up came Mitchel, and away he goes to the end of the platform. Wilson stopped in the middle and tried to look natural, which of course he did n't. When the train came along, I got aboard and walked through till I found my man and down I sat right opposite to him. I just studied his face, you bet."

"Yes, Miss, and he studied yours. You are a goose, and you disobeyed orders. I told you not to let that keen devil see you at all."

"That 's all right. It came out straight enough. At Forty-second Street he got out, and so did Wilson, and so did n't I."

"Why not?"

"Because then he might have suspected me. No, sir; I rode on up to Forty-seventh Street, crossed over, took a train down, and was waiting in the station when Mitchel came along the second time. This time he was alone, evidently having eluded Wilson at Thirty-fourth Street. He took the down train. So did I, this time keeping out of sight. He went straight to his lay, and I after him. It is a house in Irving Place. Here is the number." She handed a card to Mr. Barnes.

"You have done well," said he, taking it, "but why did you not report to me at once?"

"I am not through yet. When I take up a case I go to the end of it. Do you suppose I would track that man, and then let you turn Wilson on him again? Not much. Next day I called at the house and rang the bell. A servant girl opened the door. I asked to see the mistress. She asked what I wanted, and I told her that I had been sent for to take a situation. She looked surprised, because of course she had not been notified that she was to be discharged. I quickly went on to say that I would not like to make her lose her place, and asked what sort of people they were who lived in the house. I got her talking and soon found out that it is a kind of private boarding-school, and that there is a child there, a girl of fourteen named Rose Mitchel, and that your man is her father. How does that strike you?"

"My girl, you are a genius. But still you knew this the day before yesterday. Why did you not report?"

"I went down again yesterday to try to learn more. I sat out in the park and watched the young girls when they came out for an airing. I could not find a chance to speak to the girl, but I found out which is she by hearing the others call her name. I had my camera along, and I took her portrait for you. What do you say now. Have I wasted my time?"

"Not at all. You are clever, but you will never be great, because you are too conceited. However I have

nothing but praise for you this time. Get me the picture."

The girl went upstairs and returned with a small, rather dim photograph of a young, pretty girl, and gave it to Mr. Barnes. About half an hour later he left the house.

CHAPTER VIII.

LUCETTE.

Two days after the events just related, Emily Remsen's maid announced that she had just received news that her mother was very ill, and that she had been notified to go to her at once. Her mother, she said, lived in Elizabeth, New Jersey. She wished to go at the earliest possible moment, and begged that her cousin, Lucette, should be allowed to attend to her duties till her return, which she hoped would be in a very few days. Asked if her cousin was competent, she said yes, and especially apt at arranging the hair, having served an apprenticeship with a French hair-dresser. Indeed the girl's real name was Lucy, but she had changed it to Lucette, to pretend that being French she was necessarily a good maid.

In Miss Remsen's mind this changing of her name was nothing in the girl's favor ; but as her own maid was thus suddenly taken from her, and as this other was offered at once, she agreed to the proposal.

Lucette arrived during the afternoon, and Miss Remsen was delighted with her. Expecting a talkative, intrusive person, assuming Frenchified mannerisms, she was surprised to find a quiet unpretentious creature, who immediately showed herself to be well acquainted with the

duties required of her. Within the first twenty-four hours she found herself so much better served than by her absent maid, that she almost wished that the mother would require her for a long time. Dora, too, was charmed with Lucette.

"Queen," said she the next afternoon, "what do you think of your new maid?"

"Who?—Lucette?" answered the sister. "O I think she does very well."

"Does very well? Why, Queen, she is a jewel. If you do not appreciate her, I wish you would bequeath her to me when Sarah returns."

"O ho! So my young miss wants a maid to herself, does she?"

"O no! Not especially, but I want to keep Lucette in the family. She is a treasure. Dressing the hair is not her only accomplishment either, though I never saw yours look more beautiful. She has just arranged the table for our 'afternoon tea,' and I never saw anything like it. It is just wonderful what that girl can do with a napkin in the way of decoration."

"O yes," said Emily, "Lucette is clever; but don't let her know that we think so. It might make her less valuable. Now tell me, Dora dear, who is coming this afternoon?"

"Oh! The usual crush I suppose."

"Including Mr. Randolph?"

"Queen, there is a mystery about him. Let me tell you. In the first place, he has not been here for over a

week, and then yesterday I saw him coming down Fifth Avenue, and, would you believe it? just as I was about to bow to him, he turned down a side street."

"He did not see you, my dear, or he surely would have spoken. He would have been too glad."

"Well, if he did not see me, he must have suddenly contracted near-sightedness; that is all I have to say."

Shortly after, company began to arrive, and very soon the rooms were filled by a crowd which is aptly described by the term used by Dora. One goes to these affairs partly from duty and partly from habit. One leaves mainly from the instinctive sense of self-preservation inherent in all.

Dora was besieged by a number of admirers, and took pleasure in avoiding Mr. Randolph, who was assiduous in his attentions. He seemed anxious to get her off into the seclusion of a corner, a scheme which the young lady frustrated without appearing to do so.

Mr. Thauret was also present, though he did not remain very long. He chatted a short time with Emily on conventional subjects, and then worked his way to the side of Dora, where he lingered longer. He said several pretty things to her, such as she had heard already in different forms from other men, but with just a tone, which seemed to indicate that he spoke from his heart rather than from the mere passing fancy of pleasing. It was very skilfully done. There was so little of it, that no one, certainly not an inexperienced girl like Dora, could suspect that it was all studied. Yet after he had gone,

and the company was thinning out, Mr. Randolph found his long-sought opportunity, and sat down for a *tête-à-tête* with Dora. He began at once.

"Miss Dora, why do you allow a cad like that Frenchman to make love to you?"

"Are you alluding to my friend, Mr. Thauret?" She accentuated the word "friend" merely to exasperate Mr. Randolph, and succeeded admirably.

"He is not your friend. In my opinion, he is nobody's friend but his own."

"That has been said of so many, that it is no new idea."

"But do be serious, Miss Dora. You must not allow this fellow to worm his way into your circle, and more than all, you must not allow him to make love to you."

"You surprise me, Mr. Randolph. I had no idea that Mr. Thauret was making love to me. I could relate everything that he said, and it would scarcely bear out your assumption."

"That is only his cunning. He is too shrewd to speak plainly, so soon"; and yet this young philosopher was not wise enough to see that he was damaging his own cause by putting ideas into the girl's mind which had not yet entered there.

"Why, Mr. Randolph, you are really becoming amusing. You are like Don Quixote fighting windmills. You imagine a condition, and then give me a warning. It is entirely unnecessary, I assure you. Mr. Thauret was not acting in any such way as you impute to him."

"You are not angry with me, I hope. You know what prompted me to speak?"

"No, I fear I am not so clever as you at reading other people's motives."

"But surely you must have guessed that ——"

"Guessed what?" Dora looked at him so candidly, that he was abashed. It was his opportunity to declare himself, and he might have done so, had not Mr. Mitchel entered the room at that moment. Seeing him, Mr. Randolph thought of the peculiar position he would be in if his friend should be proven to be a criminal. For this reason he hesitated, and thus lost a chance which did not recur again for a very long time. He replied in a jesting tone, and soon after left the house.

The company had departed. Dora had gone to her own room, leaving Mr. Mitchel and Emily alone together.

"Emily, my Queen," said Mr. Mitchel, taking one of her hands caressingly within both of his, as they sat upon a *tête-à-tête* sofa, "I almost believe that I am dreaming when I think that you love me."

"Why so, Roy?"

"Listen, little woman. I am in an odd mood to-night, and I wish very much to talk to you. May I?"

For answer she touched him lightly, lovingly, on the face with her disengaged hand, and bowed assent.

"Then listen while I make my confession. I am different from other men, much as I count you different from all women. I have met many, in all the capitals of

Europe, and here in my own country. I have never been affected by any, as I was by you. In the first instant of meeting you, I had chosen you for my wife. When I asked for you, I had not the least idea that you would refuse, until having spoken, I saw the bold audacity of my words, and for half an instant the idea lived with me that I was too presumptuous."

"You were not, my Roy. Like you I have passed lovers by, as unaffected as by the ocean breezes. When I met you, I said to myself: 'This is my master.'"

"God bless you, Emily. Let me continue. I have chosen you to be my wife. As heaven is my witness, I shall never deceive you in aught. But,—and this is the hard test which your love must endure—I may be compelled at times to keep you in ignorance of some things. Do you think that your love is great enough to believe that when I do so it is from love of you, that I keep a secret from you?"

"Roy, perhaps this is conceit, but if so, still I say it. A weaker love than mine would say to you, 'I trust you, but I love you so that you need not hesitate to share your secrets with me.' I tell you that I trust you implicitly. That I am content to hear your secrets or not, as your own judgment and love for me shall decide."

"I knew that you would speak so. Had you said less I should have been disappointed. I will tell you then at once, that there is a secret in my life which I have shared with no one, and which I am not willing yet to reveal to you. Are you still content?"

"Do you doubt it? Do you think that I would make an assertion only to draw back from by boast as soon as tried?"

"No, my Queen, but it is asking much to ask a woman to marry whilst there is a secret which cannot be told. Especially when there are those who may believe that there is shame or worse, concealed."

"No one would dare to so misjudge you!"

"Indeed, but you are mistaken. There are those who do not count me as irreproachable as I may seem to you. What if I were to tell you that a detective watches me day and night?"

"Oho? That would not frighten me. You have explained all about your wager. I suppose Mr. Barnes is keeping an eye on you. Is that it?"

"Partly that, and partly because he thinks that I am connected with this murdered woman. To a certain extent he is right."

"You mean that you knew her?"

"Yes." Mr. Mitchel paused to see whether she would ask another question after his admission. But she meant all that she had said when asserting that she trusted him. She remained silent. Mr. Mitchel continued: "Naturally Mr. Barnes is desirous of learning how much I know. There are urgent reasons why I do not wish him to do so. You have it in your power to aid me."

"I will do so!"

"You have not heard what it is that I wish."

"I do not care what it is. I will do it if you ask me."

"You are worthy of my love." He drew her gently towards him, and kissed her lightly on the lips. "I say it not in egotism, for I love you as much as man may. Were you unworthy—I should never love again."

"You may trust me, Roy." Her words were simple, but there was a passion of truth contained in their utterance.

"I will tell you at once, what I wish. For it must be done promptly. You must be ready—Who is that?"

Mr. Mitchel spoke the last two words in a sharp tone, rising from his seat and taking a step forward. The large room was but dimly lighted, the gas having been lowered to please Emily who abhorred well-lighted rooms. At the further end some one was standing, and had attracted Mr. Mitchel's attention? It was Lucette, and she replied at once:

"Your mother sent me to know if you are ready for supper, Miss Emily."

"Say that we will be in, in a few minutes," replied Emily, and Lucette left the room.

"Who is that girl?" asked Mr. Mitchel.

Emily explained how the new maid had been engaged and Mr. Mitchel speaking in a tone louder than was really necessary, said:

"She seems to be a quiet, good girl. Rather too quiet, for she startled me coming in so noiselessly. Shall we go in? What I have to tell you will keep. It is something I wish you to do for me the day after to-morrow."

After supper Mr. Mitchel took the two girls and their

mother to the theatre, much to the delight of the latter, who was always shocked whenever Emily went unattended by a *chaperone*. The party walked going and coming, and as Dora and her mother were ahead, Mr. Mitchel had ample opportunity to explain to his *fiancée* the favor which he wished her to do for him. When leaving the house that night he said :

" You will not see me again for a couple of days. Keep well till then."

Lucette, who had overheard this remark, was, therefore, rather astonished to see Mr. Mitchel walk in the next morning as early as ten o'clock. She was still more surprised to have her mistress announce that she was going out. What puzzled her most of all was that Emily went out alone, leaving Mr. Mitchel in the parlor. In fact this seemed to give her so much food for reflection, that as though struck by the conclusions arrived at, she herself prepared to go out. As she was passing along the hall, however, the parlor door opened and Mr. Mitchel confronted her.

" Where are you going, Lucette ? "

" I have an errand to do, sir," she replied with a slight tremor.

" Come into the parlor, first. I wish to speak to you." She felt compelled to obey, and walked into the room, Mr. Mitchel opening the door and waiting for her to pass through. He then followed, after closing the door behind him, locking it and taking the key from the lock.

" Why did you do that ? " asked Lucette angrily.

"You forget yourself, Lucette. You are a servant, and good servants such as you have proven that you know how to be, never ask questions. However, I will answer you. I locked the door because I do not wish you to get out of this room."

"I won't be locked in here with you. I am a respectable girl."

"No one doubts it. You need not get excited, I am not going to hurt you in any way."

"Then why have you brought me in here?"

"Simply to keep you here till—well, say till twelve o'clock. That is about two hours. Do you mind?"

"Yes, I do mind. I won't be kept in here alone with you for two hours."

"You amuse me. How will you prevent it?"

Lucette bit her lip, but said nothing. She saw that there was no help for her. She might scream, of course, but Mrs. Remsen and Dora had gone out before Emily. She and Mr. Mitchel were alone in the apartment. She might attract the attention of the janitor, or of people in the street. As this idea occurred to her she glanced toward the window. Mr. Mitchel divined her thoughts in a moment.

"Don't try screaming, Lucette," said he, "for if you do, I will be compelled to gag you. You will find that very uncomfortable for two hours."

"Will you tell me why you wish to keep me here?"

"I thought I did tell you. The fact is, I do not wish you to do that little errand of yours."

"I don't understand you."

"Oh, yes, you do. You are not such a fool as all that. Now, my girl, you may as well bow to the inevitable. Make yourself comfortable till twelve. Read the paper, if you wish. There is an interesting account of the murder case. The woman, you know, who was killed in the flat upstairs. Have you followed it?"

"No, I have not," she replied, snappishly.

"That is strange. Do you know, I took you to be just the person who would have a deep interest in that kind of thing."

"Well, I am not."

For the next two hours not a word passed. Mr. Mitchel sat in a large arm-chair and simply watched the girl with an aggravating smile upon his face. In fact the smile was so aggravating, that after encountering it a few minutes, Lucette did not look at him again, but rivetted her gaze upon the opposite side of the street. At last the clock chimed twelve. Instantly the girl arose.

"May I go now?"

"Yes, Lucette, you may go now—and do your little errand—that is if it is not too late. And by the way, Lucette, Miss Remsen asked me to say to you that she will not need your services after to-day."

"Do you mean that I am discharged?"

"Not exactly that. I said you would not be needed. You see Miss Remsen thinks that you come into and go out of rooms with too little noise. She is very nervous, and it startles her to find you in her presence, without having heard you enter."

"You are a devil!" replied Lucette in a passion, as she darted through the door, which Mr. Mitchel had unlocked, and ran down-stairs and out of the house.

"I was right," thought Mr. Mitchel, as he sat down once more.

Lucette hurried across to Broadway and went into the district telegraph office at the corner. Hastily scribbling a few lines on a blank, she asked for a boy, and gave him a coin with the instruction to "hurry." She then went down to Madison Square and waited there—I was about to write, patiently—but really the word would not apply. She sat on a bench. Jumped up in less than five minutes, walked about for awhile, and then sat down again, repeating this over and over, till it was plain that she was in a bad humor,—a very bad humor.

At last she saw a man approaching her, and hurried to meet him. It was Mr. Barnes. He, too, looked excited.

"Well, what is it? Why are you here?" he asked.

"I am discharged!"

"Discharged? Why?"

"I don't know why, but that devil Mitchel is at the bottom of it. He locked me up for two hours this morning, and then told me Miss Remsen would not need me any further. I felt like scratching his eyes out." She then told the story to the detective, winding up with, "From what I did catch of their conversation last night I think he has made a confidant of his sweetheart. He asked her to help him and just as he was about to tell her

what to do, somehow he saw me and closed up like a clam. I think now it had something to do with the child."

"By heaven, you are right. I see it all. I had just returned from that house, when I got your note and came up here. I went to the school this morning pretending that I wished to place a child there. Then, after a while, I asked if my friend Mr. Mitchel's daughter, Rose, was not at the school. 'Yes,' replied the woman in charge, 'but she has just left us.' 'Left you,' said I, 'when?' 'About ten minutes ago. Her mother called for her in a carriage and took her away.' Don't you see, whilst you were locked in that room, Miss Remsen went down and removed the child."

"But Miss Remsen is not her mother?"

"No, stupid. Have n't you any sense left at all? Are you going to be a bungler all your life? This comes of your disobedience. You let Mitchel see you in the elevated train, and now you find out how smart you were."

"Nonsense, he never recognized me."

"He did. I was a fool to trust such an important matter to a woman."

"Oh! were you? Well that woman is not such a fool as you think. I have that button back."

"Ah! Good! How did you manage it?"

"They all went to the theatre last night, and I just hunted through Miss Remsen's things till I found it, in one of her jewel-cases. Here it is." Saying which, she handed to the detective the cameo button which he had

found in the room where the murder had been committed. He saw that it was the same, and was somewhat comforted to have it back.

"Has Mr. Mitchel made Miss Remsen any present lately?" he asked.

"Yes, he gave her a magnificent ruby last night. Miss Remsen told me that it is worth a fortune, and it looks it."

"How was it set?"

"It is made into a pin to be worn in the hair."

"Well, I have no further use for you at present. Go home, and be sure you keep a still tongue in your head You have done enough mischief already."

"Have n't I done any good? I think you are very mean."

"Yes, you have done some good. But you will find that in this world one failure counts against three successes. Remember that."

CHAPTER IX.

THE DIARY OF A DETECTIVE.

It was the morning of the New Year. Mr. Barnes was seated in an arm-chair by his own fireside at his cosy home on Staten Island. In his hand he held a diary, whose pages he was studying intently. Before peeping over his shoulder to read with him, it will be best to give a slight insight into the state of mind which led him to take up the book on this particular day.

After the clever manner in which he had discovered that a young girl existed, whose name was Rose Mitchel, and who was supposed to be the daughter of Mr. Robert Leroy Mitchel, and after the equally clever trick by which the girl was removed beyond his ken, Mr. Barnes had come to one conclusion. This was, that it was necessary to keep such a strict watch upon Mr. Mitchel, that if he had not already committed the crime, about which he had wagered, he should not be able to do so and avoid detection. For Mr. Barnes began to have some feeling in the matter beyond the mere fulfilment of duty. He was being thwarted by this man at every turn, and this made him doubly determined not to allow him to win that bet. Therefore he had removed Wilson from the post of watching Mr. Mitchel, and had replaced him by two

men who were thoroughly skilful. Wilson and another he set to spy upon the movements of Miss Remsen, for he hoped to find the child through her.

Being the first of January, and therefore the last day upon which Mr. Mitchel could commit his crime, within the conditions imposed, always supposing that he had not already done so, Mr. Barnes wished once more to go over the reports sent to him by his various spies, in order that he might be assured that no mistakes had been made.

He began to read at:

"Dec. 15. Mitchel left his hotel early, and went over to Hoffman House. Remained there two hours, and came out accompanied by Thauret. They walked up to the White Elephant, and spent the morning playing billiards. Lunched together at Delmonico *café*, and separated at two o'clock. Mitchel then went to his livery stable and obtained a horse and light wagon. They are his property. Drove slowly along Madison Avenue, and stopped at Thirtieth Street apartment-house. S——.

"No sign of Miss Remsen all morning. She has a new maid. Her girl Sarah returned yesterday, but her mistress refused to take her back. Evidently she recognizes that the girl was bribed to go into the country and to recommend Lucette as her cousin. About 2:30, Mitchel drove up in his light wagon. According to orders, I prepared to follow them, that they might not visit the child, eluding us by driving. Obtained a cab, and was waiting in it as the two turned into Madison Avenue and started up-town. Easily kept them in sight,

without exciting suspicion, but learned nothing as they simply drove up through the Park, along St. Nicholas Avenue and home again down the Boulevard and Riverside drive. He remained at the Remsens' till ten o'clock. Then went straight to his hotel. W——.

"Dec. 16. Mitchel spent his morning at his club. Afternoon in his hotel. Evening at Miss Remsen's. S——.

"Miss Remsen and her sister spent the morning shopping. The afternoon paying calls. The evening at home. W——.

"Dec. 17. Mitchel's actions same as yesterday, except that Thauret called on him at his hotel during the afternoon and was with him an hour. S——.

"Miss Remsen, her sister, and two other young ladies went to Brooklyn in the afternoon, but simply visited the large stores there. At home in the evening. W——.

"Dec. 18. Mitchel and Thauret together in the morning. Mitchel and Miss Remsen out walking in afternoon. Mitchel and Thauret at club in the evening. I bribed doorman and succeeded in getting in disguised as one of the servants. Mitchel and Thauret played whist, playing as partners. They lost about a hundred dollars. Went home together. S——.

"Miss Remsen indoors all morning. Out on Fifth Avenue with Mitchel in the afternoon. During their absence Thauret called. W——.

"Dec. 19. Mitchel and Thauret played poker all afternoon in one of the rooms of their club. Both lost. There were four others in the game. One of these won heavily.

I have discovered that this is undoubtedly the man who was Thauret's whist partner on the night when Randolph thought that he detected them cheating. He also answers the description of the man who left the jewels at hotel in New Haven. His name is Adrian Fisher. In the evening Mitchel and Thauret were in a box at the opera with the Remsen family. S——.

"The Miss Remsens gave an afternoon tea. Mr. Randolph called and remained to dinner. Went to the opera with the ladies in the evening. W——.

"Dec. 20. Mitchel in his hotel all day. He and Thauret went driving in the afternoon. I followed them in a light wagon. At the road house in the Park, they alighted and had a bottle of wine. Talked together earnestly. Saw Mitchel give Thauret a roll of money. In the evening they played whist as partners at the club, and again they lost. S——.

"No sign of the Miss Remsens till afternoon when a young lady called and the three went to matinee at Daly's. Evening they spent at home. W——.

"Dec. 21. Mitchel attended worship at St. Patrick's Cathedral with the two Miss Remsens. Afternoon remained in his hotel. Evening at the Remsens. S——.

"Miss Remsen and her sister at St. Patrick's Cathedral in the morning. At home the rest of the day. W——.

"According to instructions I have made inquiries about Adrian Fisher. He is a man of good family, but poor. Belongs to two fashionable clubs. Plays cards for money frequently. Is a good player and seems to earn a living

off of his friends. Has no relatives living, except a sister who is a cripple. He is very fond of her and treats her with great kindness. It is a mystery how he manages to support her as comfortably as he does. They live together in a small flat at —— East Fiftieth Street. It was he who introduced Thauret at the club, and had him made a member. He was out of town from Dec. 1st to Dec. 4th. Q——."

At this point of his reading Mr. Barnes laid down his book and thought a moment. These questions occurred to him.

"Is this man Fisher the tool of Thauret? He is poor, and a card-player. He is well born and has a sister to support in a style suitable to her birth. Has Thauret induced him to play, that together they may fleece the other members of the club? It looks like it, but why this sudden intimacy with Mitchel? Or is that less sudden than we know, and have they been long acquainted? Again, is Fisher the man who received the satchel from one of these men, and then took it to the hotel in New Haven? He was out of town at the time. Why did he place the satchel in the hotel, and then abandon it? After securing the plunder, why did he thus lose it? Was he suddenly overtaken by his conscience and becoming aware of the fact that Thauret was using him as a tool in a piece of criminal work, did he take this method of clearing himself, and of allowing the jewels to be returned to their owner as soon as found in the hotel? This would account for Thauret's having left the train at Stamford, intending perhaps to return to New Haven

and meet his confederate. Fisher, meanwhile, having abandoned the scheme and returned to New York, Thauret was thwarted. But who killed the woman?" Mr. Barnes resumed his reading.

"Dec. 26. Mitchel arose early, and called for Miss Remsen at eleven o'clock. Together they went to the home of Mr. and Mrs. Van Rawlston, at Fifth Avenue near Forty-eighth Street. They remained nearly an hour, and then separated when they came out. Mitchel eat luncheon at the Brunswick, where he was joined by Thauret. They went to the club in the afternoon and played whist. They lost money. Mitchel paid for both, and took an I.O.U. from Thauret for his share. Randolph was in the game. There is a growing coolness between Randolph and Mitchel. They barely speak when they meet. It is evident that no love is lost between Randolph and Thauret. In the evening the three men were in the Remsens' box at the opera. S——.

"Miss Remsen accompanied Mitchel to Mrs. Van Rawlston's in the morning, and left him when they came out. She made several calls mainly upon well-known fashionable society leaders. Something is evidently on the *tapis*. It occurred to me that the missing child might have been placed in the care of the Van Rawlstons. Therefore in the afternoon I allowed R—— to follow the young ladies on a shopping expedition, whilst I interviewed the policeman on the beat. He is acquainted with the Van Rawlston's maid, and will send a report to you to-night. The ladies went to the opera in the evening. W——.

"Mr. and Mrs. Van Rawlston have three children, all younger than fourteen, and only one a girl, the youngest. The Miss Remsen who called was a Miss Emily Remsen. She was accompanied by a Mr. Robert Mitchel. They came to beg Mrs. Van Rawlston to allow a society to which the young lady belongs, to give an entertainment in her house. The entertainment is to be New Year's night. Policeman 1666.

"Dec. 23. Mitchel and Thauret went to a costumer's on Union Square. When they had left I called there and said that I was a friend of Mr. Mitchel's and wished a costume made for the same entertainment. The plan worked, and by adroit questioning I discovered that there is to be an Arabian Night festival on the night of the New Year. It is to be a costume masquerade, and Mitchel has promised to send all of the men to his costumer for their dresses. He ordered an Ali Baba dress. Thauret left no order, saying he would not attend. I ordered an Aladdin costume. If you do not decide to attend I can countermand the order, but I thought you might find it advantageous to be present. With Aladdin's wonderful lamp you might shed some light upon the mystery. Pardon the joke. The afternoon and evening were spent by Mitchel and Thauret at their club. Again they played whist and again they lost. S——.

"The young ladies spent the morning at a fashionable dressmaker's on Madison Avenue. I have picked up an acquaintance with a servant girl who lives in one of the flats in Thirtieth Street house, and from her I learn that

Miss Remsen's new maid tells her that the affair at the Van Rawlston house will be a costume masquerade, all parties assuming characters from the Arabian Nights. Miss Emily Remsen will appear as Scheherezade. W——."

Mr. Barnes turned two pages at this point, evidently considering that nothing of special moment was contained in the reports covering the next few days. He began again.

"Dec. 30. Mr. Mitchel came out of his hotel at ten o'clock, and crossed over to Jersey City, taking an express for Philadelphia. I of course took same train. S——.

"The Miss Remsens were at home all day. They are busy on their costumes for the coming entertainment.

"W——.

"Dec. 31. Telegram from Philadelphia. 'Mitchel at Lafayette Hotel. Is sick in bed. Doctor in attendance. Sent a telegram to Miss Remsen telling her that he cannot be on hand to-morrow night.' S——.

"Thauret went to Union Square costumer yesterday and obtained the Ali Baba costume ordered for Mitchel. He gave the costumer a letter which he had received from Mitchel, dated at Philadelphia yesterday. It reads: 'Friend Thauret, I am suddenly taken ill. Don't let the Remsens know that it is anything serious. Oblige me, if possible, by attending the Arabian Night festival. I enclose my invitation and a note to Mr. Van Rawlston, which will introduce you. You may wear my costume, and the costumer will give it to you if you present this. You were to have gone out of town I know,

but if you wish to do me a favor I hope you will change your plans and take my place. I do not wish Miss Remsen to be entirely unattended. Therefore be with her as much as you can. She will be dressed as Scheherezade.

'(Signed) Mitchel.'

"I obtained this from the costumer by saying I am a detective shadowing a criminal. Q——."

CHAPTER X.

ALI BABA AND THE FORTY THIEVES.

After reading the foregoing, Mr. Barnes carefully locked his diary in his cabinet, and immediately after left the house on his way to New York. Reaching there he proceeded up-town, finally ringing the door-bell of the Van Rawlston mansion. He requested to see the master of the house upon urgent business, and that gentleman soon presented himself.

"Mr. Van Rawlston," said Mr. Barnes, "I am a detective. May I have a few moments of strictly private conversation with you?"

"Certainly," was the reply. "Step into my study. We will be entirely safe from prying ears there." A moment later the two men were seated in comfortable leather chairs facing each other.

"Mr. Van Rawlston," began the detective, "to explain my purpose at once, I have only to say that I desire your permission to attend the masquerade which will be held here to-night. I am aware that this must seem an odd request, but I make it entirely in your own interests."

"If you will explain more fully, sir, I may be quite willing to grant your request," said the other.

"You should know that a masquerade is a dangerous

kind of entertainment. At such affairs large robberies have often been committed—the thieves operating boldly, and escaping through the aid of their disguises. I have good reason for believing that such a crime is contemplated to-night."

"My dear sir, impossible! Why, no one will be admitted save those with whom we are well acquainted. Tickets have been issued by the society which gives the festival, and every one must unmask before being allowed to enter. Therefore, whilst I am grateful to you for your warning, I hardly think that I need your services."

"Mr. Van Rawlston, I regret to say that you are mistaken. In the first place, your close scrutiny of all who enter will probably be relaxed as the night wears on. Again, there are ways of getting in unperceived, and once within, the thief would be unsuspected. But this is no guesswork on my part. I do not think, I know, that, unless I am here to prevent it, a robbery will be committed. Indeed, I may even fail to prevent it."

"Why, sir, you speak as though you know the person who is to play the criminal."

"I do. For several weeks my men have been watching certain suspicious parties. From data furnished by my spies, I am sure that plans have been perfected by which one or more of your guests will be robbed during the progress of the entertainment."

"Still it seems incredible. As I have said, no one will be able to enter without our knowledge."

"Of course, I cannot intrude upon you, Mr. Van

Rawlston. But if you are obliged to appeal to the police to-morrow for the recovery of stolen property, you alone will be to blame if the thief shall have had several hours the start of us. I have warned you. That is the best I can do. I wish you good-morning." Mr. Barnes rose to go, but Mr. Van Rawlston stopped him.

"One moment," said he. "If you are so sure that there is a scheme of robbery afoot, of course I must not be so rash as to refuse your aid. What do you advise? We could postpone the festival."

"By no means. The course to pursue is to keep what I have told you strictly secret. In fact, if possible, dismiss it entirely from your mind, so that by your behavior the thief may not know that suspicions have been aroused. Do as I requested at first, and as I know my man I will be able to keep an eye upon him should he be present."

"I suppose it must be as you say. But you must be in costume. I have it! The committee have ordered some costumes which they will give to those who come unprovided. You may have one of those."

"What costume shall I ask for?"

"Oh, they are all alike. They are the Forty Thieves."

"The Forty Thieves?" Mr. Barnes was surprised. "Is not that an odd costume?"

"Oh, no! It was Mr. Mitchel's idea. He is the chairman of the committee. He argued that rather than provide a lot of meaningless dominos, the stragglers, who will be chiefly invited guests who are not members of the society, may be thus garbed, and still fall into the scheme

of the evening, which is that every one shall play the part of some character of the Arabian Nights."

"Very well, Mr. Rawlston, for once the detective will don the garb of a thief. After all, you know the adage, 'it takes a thief to catch a thief.'"

"Very good, Mr. Barnes—I believe that is the name on your card? Yes—Well, come to-night early and you shall be fitted out. Later, if you should wish to speak to me, I shall be dressed as the Sultan, a character about as foreign to my true self as yours will be to you."

Mr. Barnes left the house thoroughly satisfied with the result of his visit. In the first place he had learned something. Mr. Mitchel had decided upon the costuming of the guests. He had arranged that at least forty of them should be dressed alike. Could there have been any secret design in this? If so, Mr. Barnes was glad to be one of the forty. Again, this would be better than to use the Aladdin costume, for the reason that he had come to count Mr. Mitchel as so clever that it would not have astonished the detective at all if it were known to him that this Aladdin costume had been ordered. In that case the absence of such a costume amongst the guests would confuse the conspirators. Mr. Barnes had fully decided that more than one person was interested in the approaching evening.

As early as nine o'clock the maskers began to arrive at the home of the Van Rawlstons. The host appeared for the time in evening dress, and received and welcomed his guests, all of whom wore wraps that covered their cos-

tumes, thus hiding the disguises which they meant to use later on. Mr. Barnes was on hand early, and loitered about the hall, in his thief's garb, scanning the faces of all as they passed in. After a very brief period of waiting he saw the Remsen party alight from their carriage, escorted by Mr. Randolph. Soon after Mr. Thauret entered. He handed a note to Mr. Van Rawlston who upon reading it at once shook him cordially by the hand. Then almost as suddenly an expression of suspicion passed across his face, and he looked toward Mr. Barnes, who, however, turned away, refusing to notice his glance of inquiry. Evidently the host, not knowing Mr. Thauret and remembering the detective's words, had begun to suspect that perhaps the note which he had just read was fraudulent. Mr. Barnes was fearful that he would make some remark which would ruin everything, when to his intense relief Miss Remsen came into the hall with her wraps still on and went directly up to Mr. Thauret.

"How are you this evening, Mr. Thauret? I am glad you decided to come. Mr. Van Rawlston, Mr. Thauret is a friend of Mr. Mitchel's."

That sufficed, and Mr. Van Rawlston seemed much relieved.

Mr. Thauret was not in costume, but he had brought with him a satchel, and now asked where he might find a place to dress. He was turned over to one of the liveried boys, who showed him to one of the rooms set aside for the gentlemen. Mr. Barnes did not enter, for had he done so without removing his mask it might have aroused

suspicion. He however kept watch near the door, and soon saw a man come out dressed as Ali Baba. This was easily learned, for the committee had prepared handsome badges, upon each of which was engraved the name of the character assumed. These were of burnished silver, the lettering being done in blue enamel. They were worn on the left breast, and were intended to serve as souvenirs of the evening. Mr. Barnes smiled behind his mask as he looked down at his, which, to his mind, reminded him of a policeman's shield.

The rooms were gorgeously decorated in Oriental splendor. The larger one was designated the Sultan's Palace, and was truly regal in its arrangement. There were no chairs, but soft divans, and many-hued alluring cushions were to be found everywhere around the walls. The floors were covered with rugs four deep. The walls were draped with satin, drawn apart to reveal mirrors which multiplied the beauty of everything. The ceiling was hung with garlands, in which were twined roses of all kinds, which made the atmosphere redolent with perfume. From among these garlands hundreds of gilded cages held singing-birds, and electric lights made the rooms so brilliant that many times during the evening they warbled in chorus, thinking it morning.

The smaller room represented Aladdin's Cave. Stalactites, resplendent with seeming jewels, hung pendent from the ceiling. The walls were made to resemble rough stone, and every few inches a large precious stone was made fiery by the tiny electric lamp hidden behind

it. The floor alone was unlike a cave, being waxed for dancing. In a grotto up ten feet above the floor, the musicians played soft, sensuous music.

The festival opened informally. That is, whilst awaiting the arrival of others, those already present amused themselves waltzing, chatting, or chaffing one another. Mr. Barnes sauntered about, keeping Ali Baba in sight. Scheherezade came in on the arm of the Sultan. These he knew to be Miss Remsen and Mr. Van Rawlston. Ali Baba joined them almost immediately, and a few minutes later led Scheherezade into Aladdin's Cave for a dance. Mr. Barnes stood observing them, when some one touched him on the arm, and turning, he saw a man costumed as himself.

"We must be careful, or Ali Baba may discover our password, 'Sesame,' as he did in the real story."

"I do not understand you," replied Mr. Barnes.

The other man looked at him intently a moment through his mask, and without a word moved away.

Mr. Barnes was mystified. He regretted that he had not replied in some less candid fashion, that he might have heard the voice again. But taken by surprise as he was, he had lost his self-possession for a moment. If he were not mistaken the voice was one which he had heard before. He racked his memory for some minutes, and suddenly started as this thought entered his mind.

"Were he not sick in Philadelphia, I should say that was Mitchel." He followed across the room after the person, but he saw him go out into the hall, and by the

time that he himself reached there, there were at least a dozen similar costumes in a group. He looked them over carefully, but there was nothing by which he could pick out the special man for whom he was searching. He went up to one at hap-hazard, and whispered to him:

"Sesame."

"Sesa—what!" came the reply, in a strange tone.

"Don't you know our password?" asked the detective.

"Password? Rats!! We are not real thieves"; and with a laugh he turned away. Mr. Barnes felt himself powerless, and besides recalled the fact that whilst he followed this will-o'-the-wisp he was not keeping an eye upon Ali Baba. Hurrying back into the ball-room, he soon found him, though he had parted from Scheherezade.

About eleven o'clock, a blare upon a cornet attracted the attention of the frolicking throng. A man dressed as a Genius announced that the time had arrived for the entertainment. Immediately every one went into the Aladdin's Cave room, except Scheherezade and the Sultan, and a heavy pair of satin curtains were dropped, so that they hid the Cave from the Sultan's Palace.

The Sultan lay down upon a divan near the curtains, and Scheherezade sat beside him upon a satin cushion on the floor. Behind the curtains, the committee busied themselves forming a tableau, those not needed being hidden from view behind still another pair of curtains, which were of a gloriously beautiful blue, and served as a rich background. Many of the guests, knowing that their tableau would not be reached for some time, passed

around and stood crowding about the doorways of the hall, to get a view of the first pictures.

Soft music was begun, when at a signal the electric lights in the Palace room were extinguished, and the front pair of yellow satin curtains were drawn aside showing a tableau of Sindbad the Sailor. Mr. Barnes peeping from behind the red curtain noticed that as Scheherezade sat on her low cushion, in the now darkened Palace room, the rays of an electric light in the Cave just touched a gorgeous ruby which she wore in her hair. This he knew at once was the same which Mr. Mitchel had shown to him, and which Lucette told him had been presented to his *fiancée.*

Scheherezade began to recite the story of Sindbad, a monologue for the evening having been prepared which told in a few words enough to explain the sequence of the tableaux. Her voice was musical, and her reading admirable, so that very soon there was a silence as of death save as it was broken by her words. As she reached various parts of her tale, she would clap her hands, and at once others entered the scene, grouping themselves to form new pictures. Thus Sindbad was followed along his various travels, till at the end the curtains were dropped for a moment, to be parted again, showing all who had taken a character. Then followed a pretty ceremonial. Sindbad passed out of the Cave room and approached the Sultan and Scheherezade. Reaching them he stopped, made a salaam, bowing low with his arms upraised in front of him, and then passing on, tak-

ing a place in the room and so becoming a part of the audience for the succeeding pictures. Each of the characters followed his example, until all had passed out, when the next set of tableaux was at once quickly arranged. Again Scheherezade renewed her recitation.

Thus fable after fable was told and acted, the audience in the Palace room growing larger, after each, so that soon well-managed pictures received generous applause.

At last the committee announced that the fable of Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves would be the next on the program. The parts to be acted by each were quickly explained, and all was ready. As the Forty Thieves were practically like supernumeraries in a spectacular play, Mr. Barnes thought that he could take any position which he should choose and so stood through all the scenes as near to Ali Baba as possible. At last the recitation was ended, and the signal given for them to form a line to do obeisance to the Sultan. Mr. Barnes attempted to stand immediately behind Ali Baba, and was surprised to find two other men try for the same place coincidently. There was a moment of confusion, and then Mr. Barnes found himself in line just between the two other aspirants for second place behind the leader.

That what next occurred may be thoroughly understood, it will be well to call accurate attention to the position of the various actors. The Palace room was practically dark, though light from the Cave room lessened the gloom so much that the figures could be distinguished

enough to know whether a man or a woman were crossing the floor.

The Sultan, Mr. Van Rawlston, lay on a divan, not far from the Cave room, and facing it. Scheherezade, Miss Emily Remsen, sat on a cushion beside him. Both of them faced the tableaux, and it will be seen at once that from gazing towards the light, if either turned towards the darkness, blindness would result for a few moments. Ali Baba, heading the line of Forty Thieves came towards the divan. Here he stopped, made a salaam, bowing low, bringing his arms up above the head outstretched in front of him, then parting them with a swaying movement backwards, he rose erect again. This done he passed on into the darker part of the room. Next came the first of the Forty Thieves, Mr. Barnes following close behind him. This man made his salaam, bowing low. As he did so there was a slight noise. This attracted Mr. Barnes's attention for a moment, and his eye wandered in the direction of the sound. For the merest part of a second, however, did his gaze leave the man before him, and when it returned he distinctly saw the figure do this. In making his salaam when outstretching his arms he allowed his hand to pass just over the head of Miss Remsen, who was looking down, perhaps to become relieved from the glare of the other room. Mr. Barnes saw him deliberately and slowly take hold of her ruby pin, gently withdrawing it from her hair. Just then a clock began to chime the midnight hour. Instantaneously a thought flashed through the detective's mind At the first note of

the chimes the time had passed within which Mr. Mitchel had wagered to commit his robbery. He had thought that the man who had spoken to him had the voice of Mr. Mitchel. He had also come to this place expecting that this very jewel would be stolen. He had supposed that Thauret would play the part of accomplice and thief, whilst the principal, Mitchel, was manufacturing an *alibi* down in Philadelphia. It was evident now, so he thought, that Mitchel had escaped his spies, returned to New York, assumed one of the disguises which he himself had placed within easy reach, and now, on the very stroke of the last hour of his time, had committed his robbery,—a robbery, too, which would make a commotion, and yet for which he could not be imprisoned if detected, since his *fiancée* at his instigation would say that she had simply aided the scheme to further the wager, as perhaps she had, since she did not stir when the gem was being taken. All this flashed through Mr. Barnes's brain in a half moment, and by the time the thief before him had secured the ruby and was standing erect he had decided upon his course of action. This was to seize the man at once, and proclaim him a thief. Of course Mr. Mitchel would be able to explain his act, but at the same time he would have lost his wager.

The man in front turned to pass on, and Mr. Barnes darted forward to seize him, when, to his astonishment, he was himself held as in a vise by the man behind him. He struggled to free himself, but, taken by surprise, he discovered that he was powerless. What angered him

more was that the thief was fast disappearing in the gloom. Determined not to be outwitted, he shouted :

" Turn up the lights. A robbery has been committed."

Instantly all was confusion. People crowded forward, and Mr. Barnes felt himself hurled violently toward the advancing throng. Toppling against some one, both fell to the ground, and several others tumbled over them. Pandemonium reigned supreme, yet it was some time before any one thought of turning up the lights. Mr. Van Rawlston, understanding the situation better than any other, was the first to recover his presence of mind, and himself turned on the electricity. The sudden rush of light at first only made things worse, for it blinded everybody. Thus to the detective's chagrin several valuable minutes were lost before he could extricate himself from the pile of people who had tumbled over him, and find a chance to say aloud :

" Miss Remsen has been robbed. Let no one leave the house. Masks off."

Mr. Van Rawlston rushed to the door to see that no one departed, and people crowded around Miss Remsen to condole with her upon her loss. Mr. Barnes searched for Ali Baba, and was amazed when he found him to discover that it was not Mr. Thauret.

" Who are you ? " he asked roughly.

" My name is Adrian Fisher," was the reply. This astonished the detective, but it pleased him too, for it seemed to confirm the suspicion that this man was an accomplice. He decided quickly to say no more to him

at that time, and hastened towards Miss Remsen to observe her behavior. If she knew anything in advance she certainly was acting admirably, for she had grown excited, and was talking vehemently to those about her, declaring against the disgraceful management, so she termed it, which had enabled a thief to enter the rooms.

Whilst Mr. Barnes was thinking what to do, he saw Mr. Van Rawlston approaching him, accompanied by Mr. Thauret, who was now in evening dress.

"Mr. Barnes, how was this thing done? Why did you not prevent it?"

"I tried to do so, but could not. You must understand, Mr. Van Rawlston, that I am not omniscient. I suspected that this robbery would occur, but I could not know how it would be accomplished. Nevertheless I saw the act."

"Then why did you not seize the thief?"

"I attempted to do so, and was thrown down from behind by his accomplice."

"Can you identify the person by his dress?"

"That is, unfortunately, impossible. All that I know is that he was one of the Forty Thieves, and evidently played his part well."

"This is Mr. Barnes?" said Mr. Thauret, inquiringly, continuing at once: "Yes, of course it is. We have met twice, I think. You say your thief was dressed as one of the Forty Thieves. That interests me, for I wore one of those dresses. Why not ask all who did to allow themselves to be searched?"

"I will not hear of such an indignity to my guests," at once ejaculated Mr. Van Rawlston. "Search people in my own house! No, sir. I will willingly pay for the lost gem rather than do so."

"You are quite right," said the detective, keenly eying Mr. Thauret, "I am sure that it would be useless."

"As you please," said Mr. Thauret, and with a satirical smile he bowed and joined the group around Miss Remsen.

Mr. Barnes told Mr. Van Rawlston that it would be useless for him to remain longer, and that he would depart. He did not do so, however, until he had assured himself that Mr. Mitchel was not in the house. He went to the door, and found that the boy who had been told to guard it had been absent looking at the tableaux when the confusion occurred, so that he did not know whether any one had left the house or not. He therefore departed in disgust.

"That fellow Mitchel," thought he, as he walked rapidly down the avenue,—"that fellow is an artist. To think of the audacity of waiting till the very moment when his wager would be lost, and then committing the robbery in such a manner that a hundred people will be able to testify that it occurred within the limited period. Meanwhile there is an excellent *alibi* for him. Sick in a hotel in Philadelphia! Bah! Is n't there one man that I can depend upon?"

At Forty-second Street he took the elevated road, and in twenty minutes he was at his office. Here he found the spy who had followed Mr. Mitchel to Philadelphia.

"Well," said he, angrily, "what are you doing here?"

"I am sure that Mitchel has returned to New York. I came on hoping to catch up with him, and at least to warn you."

"Your warning comes too late. The mischief is done. Did n't you have brains enough to telegraph?"

"I did just before I started." The despatch was on Mr. Barnes's desk unopened. It had arrived after he had started for the festival.

"Well, well," said the detective, testily, "I suppose you have done your best. That fellow has the devil's luck. What made you think that he had come to New York? Was n't he sick?"

"I thought that might be a game for an *alibi*. To find out, I registered, asking for a room near my friend Mr. Mitchel. They gave me the one next to his. I picked the lock of the door between the rooms and peeped in. Seeing no one, I went in. The place was empty. The bird had skipped."

"Take the next train back to Philadelphia, and do the best you can to find out when Mitchel reaches there. He has gone back sure, and will be sick in bed in the morning, or my name is not Barnes. Bring me proof of his trip to and from New York, and I will give you fifty dollars. Skip."

CHAPTER XI.

MR. BARNES RECEIVES SEVERAL LETTERS.

On the morning of the third of January the mail which reached Mr. Barnes contained several letters of interest to those who follow this history. The first which he opened was very brief. It read:

"If Mr. Barnes will call at his earliest convenience he will greatly oblige EMILY REMSEN."

He read this twice, and then took up another, which was as follows:

"J. BARNES, ESQ.:

"DEAR SIR: I take the liberty of recalling to your mind the conversation which I had with you last month. I regret very much that I should have hinted that there was any possibility that my friend Mr. Mitchel might be implicated in the Pullman car robbery. As you know, Miss Emily Remsen was robbed at the festival, night before last, of a ruby pin worth $20,000. It is very evident to my mind that Mr. Mitchel's hand is in this. I know that he pretends to be sick at a hotel in Philadelphia, but may not that be a humbug? It would have been easy enough for him to slip over, don one of the Forty Thieves dominos, take the gem, and get back to Philadelphia the same night. This would be a safe theft

for him to commit, especially as he may have the assistance of Miss Remsen. Now as all is fair in a bet, I want you to undertake to prove for me that Mr. Mitchel committed this theft. I want to win that wager from him, and don't mind spending money. Even if I should advance you the whole thousand, I should save my own, provided you convict him within a year. Besides, the satisfaction to me would be worth the money. It takes a sharp man to get ahead of Mr. Mitchel. I enclose check for two hundred, as a sort of retainer, and you may draw on me for more, up to one thousand dollars if you should need it. By the way, whilst writing to you I may as well confess that I was wrong in my suspicion of Mr. Thauret. I am sure that he does not cheat at cards. I have watched him frequently since then, and he certainly plays a square game. I have no reason for liking the man, and as a fact dislike him most heartily. Nevertheless justice compels me to retract the imputation which I put upon him. Another thing: the partner with whom he played that night I told you was unknown to me. I have since made his acquaintance, and though he is poor, he is a gentleman, and above suspicion. His name is Adrian Fisher. Hoping you will help me to win my wager, Yours truly,

"ARTHUR RANDOLPH."

"So," thought Mr. Barnes, "even Mr. Randolph sees through the transparent scheme of being sick in Philadelphia and stealing his sweetheart's jewelry in New York. It is one thing to see the trick, however, and quite an-

other to prove it. He thinks that Thauret and Fisher are both virtuous. Well, I am afraid he is mistaken there." He took up another letter. It read :

"PHILADELPHIA, Jan. 2d.

"DEAR MR. BARNES :

"Pardon my familiarity, but I think we are getting pretty well acquainted with one another. I have just read the New York newspapers, and am startled to see that Miss Remsen was deliberately robbed of that valuable ruby pin which I recently gave her. You will remember that I showed you the gem the very day that I took it to be set. I am very much disturbed about this affair, especially as I am unable through sickness to return to New York, and my physician warns me that it will be several days before I can leave my room. Will you do me a great favor? Forget that I ever disparaged the detective force of which you are undoubtedly a brilliant member, and take this case in hand. I will give you one thousand dollars if you will recover the jewel, which is only a small reward considering its value. I send you a check for two hundred dollars, which you may use for expenses, and if more be needed let me know. I wish you could run over to Philadelphia to see me. A conversation with you would be a great satisfaction to me. Will you oblige, Yours very truly,

"ROBERT LEROY MITCHEL."

Mr. Barnes read this no less than three times, and then said aloud, though there was no one to hear him : "Well !" That was all, but the tone was rich in suggestiveness.

What he thought, but did not put into words, was: "That man has the coolest audacity I ever met. Here he actually offers me a thousand dollars to recover that ruby, when he knows that I was right by his side at the time of the theft. Is he so egotistic that he dares to guy me? Is he so sure that he cannot be convicted? I know that he was not in Philadelphia any way, as my man found his room empty. His *alibi* is broken, at all events, clever as he thinks himself. Will I go to Philadelphia to see him? Well, I should think so! A conversation with him will be as satisfactory to me as it possibly can be to him. But first I must obey the call from Miss Remsen. There may be much to learn there."

It was nearly an hour before Mr. Barnes's duties in connection with other cases made him at liberty. He went straight to Miss Remsen's, and was shown into her presence.

"You sent for me, Miss Remsen," he began.

"Yes, Mr. Barnes," she replied. "Will you be seated?" The detective accepted her invitation, and she continued: "To come to the point at once, I wish to see you about my lost ruby. It was a present from Mr. Mitchel to me, and besides being very costly, I attach a sentimental value to it. I want you to undertake to recover it, and I will give you a thousand dollars if you succeed."

Mr. Barnes had never had so many thousand-dollar offers made to him in so short a time before. He smiled slightly, and said:

"Your offer comes too late, Miss Remsen. I have a

letter from Mr. Mitchel himself, making a similar offer. It would scarcely be proper for me to accept two rewards for one service."

"Then you refuse to help me?"

"On the contrary, I will use my utmost endeavors to detect the thief and recover your property for you. But I need no money from you."

"You are very conscientious, Mr. Barnes, and I admire it. I honor a man who places his duty above money."

"I thank you for your courteous remark. Now, if I am to help you, you must begin by assisting me."

"I will do whatever I can, certainly."

"Then tell me, have you no suspicion as to who might have taken your jewel?" The girl hesitated, and the detective watched her face keenly. As she did not reply at once, he asked another question.

"Did you feel the person take the pin from your hair?'

"Yes, I did, but I did not realize what was occurring till he had it!"

"Why did you not make any resistance, or cry out?"

Again she hesitated, but in a moment she said firmly:

"I know that you have a right to ask me these questions, and I will reply to them if you insist upon it. But first tell me, would it be right for me to call a name to you, as one that I may have suspected, when I had but the flimsiest excuse for my suspicion? Might I not thus do more harm than good by attracting your attention to a false scent?"

"That is certainly a possibility, Miss Remsen, but it is

one which I am inclined to risk. I mean that I prefer to trust to my experience, than to have you omit to tell me your suspicions."

"Very well, only promise me that you will not jump to conclusions, and thus perhaps annoy the person whom I shall name."

"I agree to that. I will take no action without sufficient reason other than that furnished by yourself."

"Very well. You asked if I suspected any one, and again why I did not resist the thief. If you will remember, my head was bowed. At first I could not understand how something seemed to move my pin. I fancied that it had become entangled in the Sultan's robe. Then the clock began to chime, and in a moment it flashed across my mind that perhaps Mr. Mitchel was taking my pin, in order to win his wager. Therefore I said nothing. This makes my action clear to you?"

"Perfectly. Then I am to understand that Mr. Mitchel did not tell you in advance that he would do this?"

"No, he did not, and that is why I have sent for you."

"I don't understand you."

"Why, all the time that I thought he had the pin I was not worried. I even went so far as to act indignation at the festival. That was partly for your edification and mystification. I wanted to help Mr. Mitchel's plan. But when it occurred to me yesterday that Mr. Mitchel, if he had meant to take the pin, would have told me in advance, I saw at once that my first idea was wrong, and that my ruby is really gone. Then I wrote to you."

"Then you feel sure that he would have told you in advance?"

"Positive."

"May he not have feared to ask you to implicate yourself in a robbery, and possible scandal? You know he was liable to arrest, and it might be a considerable time before he could have proven that his theft was only a joke. He may have wished to spare you notoriety."

"He knows me better than that." She said this with a smile.

"How better?" asked the detective.

"I mean that he knows there is nothing that I would not risk for him, since I have consented to give him myself. I am one of those women, Mr. Barnes, who are not easily deterred from aiding the man of her choice."

"Do you mean that you would be willing to share unenviable notoriety with him, and that he knew this?"

"I do, and therefore feel confident that he would have asked my assistance if it had been his intention to take my pin."

"Just as he did on another occasion?" The detective had been leading her up to this for the last few moments, and now watched to see the effect. She did not change countenance, but simply said:

"What occasion?"

"The morning when he locked your maid in this room, whilst you went down-town and took a little girl from one house to another?"

"To what other?" This was a hard one for the

detective, and as he did not reply she smiled aggravatingly, as she continued :

"Mr. Barnes, you have no proof of your assertion. You suspect that I did what you say, but you do not know it. As I told you just now, it is possible for a bare suspicion to lead one astray."

"Perhaps, but I do not think that I am far wrong in this instance."

"We will not discuss it. Let us return to the ruby. You told Mr. Van Rawlston, so he tells me, that you knew in advance that this crime was about to occur. Did you know the person who would take the pin?"

"To be perfectly frank with you, Miss Remsen, I expected that Mr. Mitchel would take it. I think now that he did take it. Do you wish me to continue the investigation? It may lead to your friend's losing his wager, whereas you have the right to notify the police that your gem has been returned to you. That would make our work on the case useless, and assure him of winning his bet."

Mr. Barnes's object here was ingenious. He thought that if the girl accepted his suggestion, he would thus be assured that she still suspected Mr. Mitchel. Thus he would reach her true opinion of the case. Her answer was.

"I cannot do that. It would certainly be to give up my hope of recovering the stone. I am sure that Mr. Mitchel has not taken it. If I am wrong, and he has done so without trusting me, why then he has made a

mistake, and must suffer by it. I am sure, however, it will prove otherwise. So do the best you can, if you please."

"You may rely upon it that my best energies shall be devoted to this work. I wish you good-morning."

About six o'clock that same afternoon, Mr. Barnes sent his card up to Mr. Mitchel, at the Lafayette, in Philadelphia. A few minutes later he was shown into that gentleman's room, and found him in bed.

"Delighted to see you, Mr. Barnes. You are very kind to come and see me. For doing so, I am almost willing to forgive you for the wrong which you have done me."

"Wrong? What wrong?"

"Do you remember the day you came to see me at the Fifth Avenue, about the button which you had found? You asked me to show you the seventh of my own set. I agreed on condition that you would not annoy the lady."

"Well!"

"You broke your promise—that is all."

"In what way?"

"In the first place you bribed her maid to tell her a lie, and leave her, so that one of your spies could take her place. Secondly, your spy did take her place. The result of which was that Miss Remsen could not re-engage her old maid, and has had much trouble to get another as good."

"I did not foresee, when I made that promise, that such an emergency would arise as did later."

"Very true! But I did, and I warned you that you would gain nothing by making the promise, since you would only find my own story verified by your visit."

"Well, I am very sorry, and will say that it shall not occur again."

"But, Mr. Barnes, it has occurred again."

"How so?"

"Why, she cannot leave her home at any time, without being dogged by your spies."

Mr. Barnes bit his lip in chagrin to find how well this man was acquainted with his plans, but he replied unhesitatingly,

"This time you are wrong. I promised you not to annoy Miss Remsen in connection with the particular case of which we were then speaking. My men have shadowed her in connection with another affair."

"What other affair?"

"Abduction."

"Abduction? Absurd! Who on earth has Miss Remsen abducted?"

"The girl Rose Mitchel."

"And who, pray, is the girl Rose Mitchel? The daughter of the murdered woman?"

"Perhaps. That is what I intend to discover. She passed however, as your daughter."

"Ah! Now can you prove that she is not?"

"No."

"Very good. Then, so far as your information goes, Rose Mitchel who passed as my daughter, was removed

from a certain house, to a certain other house, to you unknown." He paused a moment as though to enjoy Mr. Barnes's discomfiture, then continued: "She was taken, so you suspect, but cannot prove, by Miss Remsen. Now, then, if Miss Remsen, my affianced wife, takes a girl who is my own child from one house to another, where is the abduction so long as I make no complaint?"

"Let us drop this nonsense, Mr. Mitchel. You know very well that that child was removed for a purpose, else she would not be hidden away. If Miss Remsen had a hand in this, she was aiding you to baffle detective investigation, and that was an illegal act. Therefore we have the right to watch her, in order to discover what we can."

"Very well, then we will grant you that privilege. Much good may it do you. But as to the removal of the child, that was done because your spy Lucette had discovered where she was, and I did not choose to have her annoyed."

"What makes you so certain that this Lucette was my spy, as you term it?"

"Well, I don't mind telling you that, though perhaps I am showing my hand a little. Let us go to the beginning. In the first place you knew about my bet, and I knew that you knew that much. From that starting-point what more natural than for me to suppose that you would begin by having me shadowed. To be sure of this, I made a few trips on the elevated road, a structure peculiarly applicable for such a test, with the result of course that I soon became pretty well acquainted with your assistant. When-

ever I had nothing else to do, I would amuse myself getting away from him. You gave me occupation for several hours I assure you. But to come to Lucette. I guessed that the next step in your game would be to supply spy number two, who would take up the trail wherever spy number one would lose it. I began to look for this second man. See, I admit that I did not count upon a woman. You beat me there, or almost did. I don't suppose you told the girl to let me see her face, eh?" Mr. Barnes made no reply, though to himself he said, "Just as I told the fool." Mr. Mitchel went on: "At last one day, just as I was getting on a train, a smart-looking young woman came out of the waiting-room and followed me aboard. Purely from habit I walked through the train to the first coach. I ride in that because it is the coolest in summer and the least draughty in winter. Now there were several cross seats empty in the coaches through which I passed, and as the young woman behind me did not take one, but followed me through the train, I became suspicious. When she sat down opposite to me, of course I studied her face. I hardly ever forget a face after I have made a mental note of it. The rest was simple. She was sharp enough not to get off the train when I did, and I dismissed her from my mind. Thus I suppose she was enabled to follow me to the Irving Place house. But of course I recognized her at once when I saw her at Miss Remsen's."

"Did I understand you to say that this Rose Mitchel is your daughter?"

"I don't know what you understood, but I did not say so. I spoke of her just as you did, 'Rose Mitchel, who passed as my daughter.'"

"Well, then, is she your daughter?"

"I decline to answer."

"Why do you do so?"

"I must decline to reply to that also."

"Do you not see, Mr. Mitchel, you are simply making your actions more and more suspicious?"

"My dear Mr. Barnes, I do not care a straw how much suspicion I arouse, so long as I am not confronted by any proof. Whenever you think you have any proof against me, come to me and I will endeavor to refute it."

"Very well. You have asked me to discover who stole Miss Remsen's ruby. I have already done so."

"Mr. Barnes, you are a genius. Who is it?"

"Yourself."

"Bosh! Can't you do better than that? Why, I have been sick abed here for over three days."

"Mr. Mitchel, you are caught this time. You were not sick abed here at the time of the robbery. On the contrary you went over to New York, attended the festival, and took the ruby pin from Miss Remsen's hair."

"Mr. Barnes, you are laboring under a delusion. I tell you I have been in this room since December 30th."

"One of my men followed you to this place. On the night of the 1st, he registered at this hotel, being as-

signed to the room next to this. He picked the lock of the communicating door, and came in here, thus discovering your absence."

"Very clever idea, I am sure. The fellow deserves credit. But did he tell you which communicating door he came through?"

Mr. Barnes looked around and was amazed to find that the only door in the room opened on the hall. The story told by his man was thus an impossibility. A thought came to him quickly and he said:

"You have changed to another room since then. You were at that time in No. 234."

"And this is number 342, a floor higher up. But you are wrong; I have not changed my room. I will explain how your man has made this mistake. I knew when I came here that your spy had probably followed me. I was tired of the espionage. This is what I did. I registered and was given number 234. I was shown to the room and at once sent for the clerk. When he came up I asked for another room, and desired him not to make any change on the register, as I had an inquisitive friend who would not hesitate to walk right up if he knew what room I was in. I explained that I wished to avoid him. My request was granted. I suppose your man asked for a room near that of his "friend Mr. Mitchel." The clerk at once thought him to be the man whom I wished to avoid, and gave him a room next to 234, which of course satisfied him, and I am sure pleased me as well."

Mr. Barnes was supremely disgusted, especially as, during the interview, he had become thoroughly satisfied that Mr. Mitchel was really sick and troubled with a bad cough. He returned to New York puzzled.

CHAPTER XII.

THE HISTORY OF THE RUBY.

During the next two weeks there were numerous references to the ruby robbery in the daily papers. Interviews were published purporting to have been held with every one of note who had been present. The police were twitted with their inability to discover the thief. The detectives from the central office came and went mysteriously, and were silent to all questioners, the while maintaining an expression which plainly said, "We could an' if we would." One or two persons were even arrested, only to be promptly discharged when brought before the committing magistrates. So that interest in the affair soon died out. Another crime occurred, and all New York had something else to talk of. The Remsen ruby was forgotten by the masses.

Mr. Barnes, however, thought of little else. He racked his brain for a promising starting-point, and the more he thought, the more he was tempted to make a trip to New Orleans, to unravel this, as he had many other mysteries, "from the other end." Yet he hated to leave the scene where were the chief actors in the drama, and, as he felt certain, the principal in one or all of the crimes. At last he resolved to make a move, hoping little from it, yet

unwilling longer to rest actually idle in this case. He wrote the following letter :

"MR. ARTHUR RANDOLPH :

"DEAR SIR—Since you have engaged me to undertake to prove that Mr. Mitchel himself stole the ruby on the night of the festival, I presume that you will consent to give me some assistance in the matter. In the first interview that I had with you you may recall that you stated that your friend, in your opinion, is somewhat insane on the subject of celebrated jewels. You said, in effect, that if he were pressed a little on this line he would drift off into the narration of tales of gems and crimes committed to obtain them. I would much like to hear Mr. Mitchel talk upon his hobby, but, as you know, he is on the defensive with me. Can you in some way arrange to have a talk with him yourself and draw him out, whilst I should be secreted where I could overhear the conversation? I should wish you to mention the loss of the ruby, to suggest, if not charge outright, that he himself has taken the gem ; and when he denies it, as he surely will, ask him whether there is any peculiar story connected with it—that is, whether it has ever been stolen before. From such a conversation I might get a hint, which, seeming as nothing to you, might be valuable to me. Will you do this? Remember you yourself said that 'all is fair,' etc.

"Yours truly,

"J. BARNES."

In reply to this he received a note asking him to meet Mr. Randolph at his club on the following evening.

The next afternoon Mr. Mitchel called at the Hoffman House and went up to the room occupied by Mr. Thauret, finding that gentleman at home. Mr. Thauret advanced to meet him, and the two shook hands cordially.

"Thauret," began Mr. Mitchel, "I want to talk to you seriously about that jewel robbery."

"I am all attention," said Mr. Thauret, lighting a cigarette and dropping into a comfortable rocking-chair.

"To begin with, let me recapitulate. I will go back to our partnership arrangement. You and I became, in a way, secret partners, or, perhaps, 'gambling pals' would be more accurate. At that time I agreed to furnish the capital for our operations up to a certain point. I believe I have done so, in spite of the fact that our losses have been rather heavy, and the further fact that you confidentially told me that you had a method, or a system, by which losses could be avoided, or at least controlled. Am I accurate?"

"Quite so, my friend. You have proven yourself an admirable silent partner, since you have allowed me to have my own way, paying the bills and asking no questions, till now. Am I to understand that the losses annoy you, and that you wish an explanation?"

"You may give me one in a moment. There is another point. You promised to drop Adrian Fisher."

"Well?"

"You have not done so. I requested you to wear the

Ali Baba costume the other night, and yet you chose to give it to Fisher. Why was that?"

"It will be more simple to explain about the losses first, and come to Fisher later. As you perhaps know, that detective Barnes has chosen to place a spy at my heels. Under the circumstances, I thought it wise to play the spy upon my spy. Several times I have gone to the club, and then placed myself where I could watch my man. In this way I soon discovered that he had become intimate with one of the club servants. One day I called this fellow, and partly by threatening to have him discharged, but mainly by using money, I got out of him what the detective was asking about me. This was chiefly whether I lose or win when I play cards. I found that the result of every game that I played was being reported. Consequently after that I made it a rule to lose."

"To lose my money!"

"To lose our money, since we are partners. You are simply advancing the funds till I get remittances from Paris. You have my I.O.U's. If you are tired of the arrangement, I will pay you at once, though it would be inconvenient."

"No, the money is of no consequence. But tell me, why did you think it best to lose?"

"It is very simple. From the fact that the detectives are investigating this point, it is evident that they had heard of the winnings which I made when Fisher played with me. They may have concluded that I am a card sharper. I wish to dispel that idea."

"Naturally. But now tell me about Fisher. What has this to do with him?"

"As you know, I did not design to attend the festival. You went to Philadelphia, were taken ill, and sent me a letter asking me to take your place, and wear your dress, which I was to obtain by presenting your note to the costumer. I did this, fully intending to carry out your wishes."

"Then how was it that Fisher wore my costume?"

"I am coming to that. Just before leaving for the affair, who should call here but the costumer, who informed me that a man had been to his place, and had catechised him about me, explaining that he was a detective hunting down a celebrated criminal. He showed the fellow your note. Afterwards he regretted having done so, and came to notify me, as he expressed it, 'so that I might not get into any trouble.' I saw at once that this meant that Barnes would be at the festival, or, at any rate, one of his men."

"You were right in that. He was there."

"Yes, but I was not sure of it till after the robbery, when all unmasked. He wore one of the Forty Thieves dominos, and I failed to see through the disguise. With the knowledge thus obtained, I determined to have some amusement at the expense of your great detective, and decided to wear one of the dominos instead of your dress. It was essential, however, that some one should impersonate Ali Baba in order that the tableaux might not be interrupted. Fisher was the only man I could ask to

assume the *rôle*. He acquiesced, and that is all there was to that. I have not taken him up again, I assure you."

"Very good. That is satisfactory. You must pardon my questioning; but after all, I did not understand, and had a right to do so. Tell me, were you near when the robbery occurred? Did you see it done?"

"I must have been near, but I did not see it. I was awaiting to kiss the hand of the Scheherezade when Mr. Barnes suddenly cried out that a robbery had been committed, and ordered masks off. I slipped out of my domino, and went to him as soon as the lights were on."

"You might have suggested to him to search everybody, as he did on the train."

"By George! that is just what I did, but he declined. I guess that train experience made him dubious as to the value of that sort of thing."

At this both men laughed heartily, as though enjoying the discomfiture of the detective.

"It seems," said Mr. Mitchel, "that Barnes suspected that the ruby was to be stolen, and informed Mr. Rawlston early in the evening that there would be thieves in the audience."

"Did he, indeed? Too bad that, with all his shrewdness, he was not able to catch the thief, or thieves rather, eh?"

Once more they both laughed. Then Mr. Mitchel suggested that they should go to the club, and thither they went. Upon entering, the doorkeeper informed Mr. Mitchel that Mr. Randolph was in the parlor and desired

to see him. He and Mr. Thauret therefore went into the great reception-room. Mr. Randolph arose as they appeared.

"Good-evening, Randolph," said Mr. Mitchel. "You wish to see me?"

"Oh, nothing special. I came in to dine here, and told the doorman to send you to me in case you should turn up. I wanted company, that is all."

"Don't like to eat alone, eh?"

"That is it. Eating is a nuisance, made tolerable only by good companionship. Mr. Thauret, shall I have a place set for you, also?"

"If you desire, I shall be most happy," said Mr. Thauret.

"Very well," said Mr. Randolph. "I will attend to it. I have some letters to write now, if you will excuse me. Meet me promptly at seven in the private dining-room."

Mr. Randolph left the apartment, and went to the floor above. Here he joined Mr. Barnes, who was awaiting him.

"Well," said the detective, "can you manage it?"

"Everything is arranged. Mitchel is here, and he has brought Thauret with him. I don't understand the intimacy that has sprung up between those two, but that is not to the point. They will dine with me in our private dining-room. I shall arrange that our meal shall be served at a table immediately next to the large *portière* that separates the private dining-room from the main saloon. I shall also order a dinner for you at a table just on the other side of the curtain. If you have good ears, you should hear all that passes with little difficulty."

"I am satisfied with your arrangement and shall undoubtedly be able to hear at least the greater part of what occurs."

"Very well. Now go to the library, and at the farther end, hidden behind a newspaper file, you will be safe from the observation of prying eyes. Promptly at seven, I and my guests will take our seats. Five minutes later your own place will be in readiness, and you can take it in safety."

Mr. Barnes followed these instructions, and Mr. Randolph went to the dining-room to perfect his arrangements. At seven, on the minute, he was joined by his invited guests, and the three sat at table. Shortly after the noise of dishes on the other side of the *portière* indicated that Mr. Barnes was being served.

About the third course Mr. Randolph endeavored to lead the conversation in the desired direction.

"I trust" said he, addressing Mitchel, "that you have entirely recovered from that unfortunate illness that prevented you from attending the affair at Rawlston's."

"Oh, yes," said Mitchel, "it was but a temporary matter. The only serious result was that I was kept from the festival. I think I might have saved Miss Remsen from the annoyance of losing her ruby."

"But, Mitchel," said Mr. Randolph, "whilst of course one does not like to lose so valuable a gem, at the same time you can safely replace it."

"What makes you think so?"

"Why, you have so many jewels. Do you know I was

saying only recently that any one who, like you, would hoard up rare gems, keeping them locked in a vault where no one can see them, is in a way insane. I was glad when you gave that ruby to Miss Remsen, and took it as a symptom of returning lucidity that you should unearth one of your hidden treasures. I have no doubt that you have others like it buried in some corner of your safe. Why not get one out and present it to the lady?"

"You are mistaken, Randolph. I cannot so easily produce a mate to that ruby."

"Why not? Was there anything peculiar about it?"

"Yes, but we will not talk of it."

This curt way of dismissing the subject was a surprise to Mr. Randolph, for, however little Mr. Mitchel cared to show his gems, he had never before been unwilling to embrace any opportunity to talk about them. Mr. Randolph started in a new direction, remembering the hints of the detective.

"Mitchel," said he, "I would almost be willing to wager that you not only can give Miss Remsen as good a ruby, but that you could actually give her the same one."

"I hope to do so," was the quiet reply.

"You don't understand me. I mean that I half believe that your sickness in Philadelphia was all a farce; that you came over, and yourself stole the gem."

"Indeed? And what leads you to such a preposterous deduction?"

"I think that this is your way of endeavoring to win

your wager. I think that no one but yourself could have taken the pin from Miss Remsen's hair, as for no one else would she have submitted."

"Randolph, your repeated allusions to Miss Remsen, in this connection, and especially your insinuation that I would ask her to be an accomplice in such a piece of duplicity, and that she would consent, are distasteful to me in the extreme. If you will pardon my saying so, it is a poor entertainment to offer a guest."

"Oh, I meant no offence, old man, I assure you. We will drop the subject of course."

This was followed by a silence. Mr. Randolph was at his wits' end to find a way to force Mr. Mitchel to talk. He felt that nothing had been accomplished. Mr. Barnes, however, thought differently, for he had at last come to a positive conclusion. From Mr. Mitchel's tone of voice and the words of his last speech, the detective felt certain that whatever part Mr. Mitchel himself may have played in the robbery Miss Remsen was innocent. He also wondered whether the conversation would now drift back to the ruby. Perhaps it would not have done so had not Mr. Thauret, who up to this point had scarcely spoken during the progress of the meal, once more broached the subject.

"I beg pardon, Mr. Mitchel," said he, "but your remark just now, that there is something special about the lost ruby, has greatly excited my curiosity. Unless you have some private reason for not doing so, I beg that you will tell us the history of the gem, if it has one."

There was a pause, during which Mr. Mitchel looked at his plate and seemed as though studying a problem. Mr. Randolph was delighted that Mr. Thauret had come to his assistance in this unexpected way, and as he observed Mr. Mitchel's hesitation it seemed to him that there was a contest going on in his mind, between a powerful desire to talk on his hobby, and some prudential whisper that silence would be better. The detective also waited with some anxiety, a piece of a sweetbread on his fork, carried but half-way to his mouth.

"Well, gentlemen," at last said Mr. Mitchel, "I will tell you the story." Mr. Barnes took the tidbit from his fork with a smile that showed his teeth as they bit it incisively. "First join me in a glass," continued Mr. Mitchel; "drink this ruby-colored wine and pledge me that you will not repeat what I say. This only because I do not wish to attain the unenviable reputation of being a romancer, as I certainly should if some reporter should hear and publish the story now, whilst the loss of the gem is fresh in the memory of all"

The pledge was given, and Mr. Mitchel continued.

"That you might better appreciate this stone, I might begin with a dissertation on rubies, explaining to you the difference between the true Oriental gem, which is rare of any magnitude, and the poorer specimens, known as spinels. However, you would only accuse me of ventilating knowledge which has come to me through the study of my hobby. I will come at once to the story of the lost jewel. Just where it was first found is not accurately

known, and of its earlier history I can only tell you what has been told to me. You may believe as much or as little as you like. The history then begins with the finding of Moses in the bulrushes, and the subsequent gift to him of this ruby by the daughter of Pharaoh. Thus we hear of it first in the royal house of the Egyptians. There was another gem, the exact counterpart to it. This, Pharaoh had amongst his treasures, and wore upon state occasions. With the exodus of Moses and the Israelites the ruby passed out of Egypt. From that time, for many centuries, its history is not marked by any great event, save that we learn that it was kept by the high priests of the Synagogue and so passed down from generation to generation. One odd fact I must not forget. The deep red color as you know is the most prized. The color of this ruby at the present time is the most perfect in existence. Yet, so the story goes, at first the matched pair of gems were of a pale rose color."

"Do you mean us to believe," interrupted by Mr. Randolph, "that the color has deepened with time?"

"I do not ask you to believe anything. But it is not time that is supposed to have improved the color. With the conquest of Jerusalem this jewel fell into the hands of the Romans, and so in time came into the possession of Cæsar. In his courtship of Cleopatra he soon discovered that extraordinary woman's passion for resplendent jewels, and he was audacious enough to present it to her. Fearing that this might be readily traced to him, when the jewel was missed as it would surely be, he told

her secretly of his purpose, and then tied it about the neck of a pigeon, which flew with it directly to the palace of Cleopatra, who awaited the arrival of the bird on the roof-tops. The pigeon, when nearly home, was attacked by a hawk and Cleopatra ordered one of her archers to slay the larger bird with his arrow. This the man attempted, but struck the pigeon, which fell bleeding and dead at the queen's feet. She at once removed the gem, which was covered with blood and dyed with it a rich red."

"But, Mr. Mitchel," said Mr. Thauret, "surely a ruby could not absorb blood?"

"It is the history of the gem." Mr. Mitchel spoke in so odd a tone that one almost thought that, carried away by his love of precious stones, he had imbibed some of the superstition connected with them. He spoke as though he believed the tale. Mr. Barnes began to understand better what Mr. Randolph had meant when he said that perhaps the desire to possess a rare stone might tempt this gentleman to commit a crime. Mr. Mitchel continued:

"I need not follow the story of Cleopatra. It is too well known. But there is an incident that has not been written in the general history of her career. There was an Egyptian priest who was madly in love with her, and in a moment of impulse he dared to tell her of his attachment one day when alone with her. She seemed slightly amused at his ardor, and asked what he, a poor priest, could offer her, who had rich rulers at her feet.

In desperation he answered that he could give his life. The Queen laughed and said: 'That is mine already. But you priests claim to be all-wise. Find me the mate to my great ruby, and perhaps I will listen to your love pleadings.' To her intense surprise the man replied: 'That I could do, if I dared. The gem which you have has but returned to its proper place. It was once Pharaoh's. He also had the mate to it, which from him descended through kings to Rameses the Great. It is buried in his coffin.' 'Get it for me,' was the terse reply of Cleopatra, given now as a command rather than a request.

"In fear the priest went into the pyramid and stole the jewel. When he presented it to Cleopatra she cried out at him: 'What fool's trick is this? Do you think this pale stone a match to mine?' The priest explained that hers had been dyed red in the blood of the pigeon. 'Ah, so!' she replied; 'then this one shall be also a richer red. You promised me your life once. I claim it, and in your blood this stone shall be steeped till it matches the other in color.' She carried out her threat, and the two stones were once more mates."

"What an absurdity!" exclaimed Mr. Randolph.

"Do not say so," said Mr. Thauret; "we cannot tell what may happen in this world."

"The next change of owners was when Cleopatra killed herself. One of her handmaidens stole the two rubies, but she herself was taken a slave to Rome and sold. Her purchaser discovered the rubies, took them

from her, and then secretly murdered her lest she might tell that he had them. From this time on they have gone by the name of 'The Egyptian Gems.' I need not give you the whole list of robberies and murders that have been connected with the two stones, though I have the written record complete, with names of all the victims. Suffice it to say that for years no one was the gainer by getting possession of them. They have always been impossible to sell, until I bought this one, which is the first time either ever was offered honestly in the market. Before this, each new owner had obtained the jewels either by theft or murder, and dared not admit that he had them. Another curious thing is that no one has ever succeeded in hiding the jewels, so that they could not be found. They have been secreted between the stones of a wall, they have been sewn under the hide of an ass, and hidden in other equally obscure places, yet always the next thief has found and taken them."

"Ah, that is interesting," said Mr. Thauret. "But tell us frankly, since we are pledged not to repeat what we hear, do you suppose there is any power inherent in the stone which attracts persons to their discovery?"

"I cannot say, but that is one of the claims. This seems to be substantiated by recent events too."

"How so?"

"Well, my usual interest in large gems led me to police head-quarters when that woman Rose Mitchel was killed after having been robbed. The jewels you remember had been quickly recovered and are still in

the hands of the police. I was allowed to see them, and the ruby in that lot is undoubtedly the mate to mine."

"You think that it was the presence of that stone which led to the discovery by the police of the satchel containing the jewels?"

Mr. Thauret seemed much interested, but Mr. Mitchel merely shrugged his shoulders for answer, though it seemed plain that he did hold that opinion. Mr. Barnes wondered whether Mr. Thauret's interest was due to the fact that, having stolen the jewels, he was astonished to hear of so strange an explanation of their recovery from the hotel where he had hidden them. Yet the man's next words seemed to dispel such an idea. He said:

"You may believe in that sort of thing, Mr. Mitchel, but I, who have only modern ideas, cannot accept any such theory. The fact that the stones have always been discovered when hidden has led those who know the history to mistake a chain of coincidences for evidence of supernatural power within the stones themselves. I think I can readily account for the series of hidings and findings."

"I should be pleased to have you do so," said Mr. Mitchel.

"Have you never read Edgar Poe's tale, the one where a letter is stolen and hidden? The detectives failed to find it, though it was in plain sight all the time, but another man did find it. He went upon the correct theory that the thief, knowing that a search would be made, and guessing that all obscure places would be explored first, would hide it in some commonplace manner. He visited

the apartments, and found the letter in the letter-rack. Now this is ingenious, but Mr. Poe here gives us a bit of special pleading and a curious anomaly at the same time. He wished to show that an obscure corner would be a bad hiding-place, and so worked out his result. At the same time he draws a skilful thief who baffled expert police, and yet who hid his letter where the first man with brains easily found it. This is the anomaly. Where the article is small, as is the case with this lost ruby, there is but one safe place for the thief to hide his stolen property."

"And that place is?" asked Mr. Mitchel, himself betraying interest.

"Upon his own person, where at all times he could be on the alert to thwart the searching committee."

"Ah, you are forgetting," said Mr. Mitchel, "that idea was not overlooked by Edgar Poe. In the tale, the man was waylaid by officers in disguise, who bound him and then searched him. If the letter had been about him, it would have been found."

"Not at all. The letter was placed in an envelope, which had been turned, and then mailed so that on the reverse it received the postal imprint. This foiled the detectives when they examined the letter-rack. It would have fooled them in exploring his pockets, if found with other letters similarly addressed. On the other hand, had it been in his pocket, the man who finally obtained it could not have done so by creating a confusion in the street which attracted the man to the window. It would

have been difficult for him even to guess that it was in the pocket. Besides, with the ruby it would be simple, since it is an article that can be disposed of at a moment's notice."

"Very true," said Mr. Mitchel, "but—— " Here he paused for a moment, and seemed abstracted. Quickly recovering, he said: "What was I saying? I have lost the thread of our conversation."

"Mr. Thauret suggested that the thief could keep the ruby about him," replied Mr. Randolph.

"Ah, exactly. Now I remember. Well, I should say that it would be a hazardous undertaking. I believe had I stolen the gem, as, by the way, Randolph, you suggested, I could do better than that."

"Ah," said Mr. Randolph, "this is getting interesting. Come, tell us; how should you hide the jewel, supposing that you had taken it?"

"That is a leading question," said Mr. Mitchel. "I prefer not to answer it. Walls have ears, you know." He said this in a significant way that made Mr. Randolph uncomfortable for a moment. Mr. Mitchel at once continued: "I will say this, however, that the thief, whoever he is, cannot profit by his theft."

"Why not?" asked Mr. Thauret.

"Because there is not another gem in existence save those two which are so absolutely perfect in color. In fact, they are the standards by which rubies are valued. It is claimed that the expression 'pigeon-blood ruby' owes its existence to the staining of one of these gems in

the manner described. Dealers sometimes cut a pigeon's throat to compare the blood with the color of a gem being appraised. The significance of this is, that the stolen gem cannot be sold as it is, because it would be recognized, and I have notified all the great dealers in the world that my 'Egyptian Gem' has been stolen. If it were attempted to have it cut up, the lapidary would at once report the matter, as the reward offered by me is greater than could be earned by recutting the stone."

"Suppose that the thief himself is a gem cutter?" asked Thauret.

"Even then the perfect color would at once tell the first dealer to whom he applied that the 'Egyptian Gem' had been recut."

"The thief might be a patient man, and all things come to him who waits," replied Mr. Thauret.

"True," said Mr. Mitchel. "But mark my words, the 'Egyptian Gem' will not be sold by the person who has it now."

"Especially if that person is yourself," said Mr. Randolph.

"Just so," answered Mr. Mitchel.

The conversation now drifted to other things, and shortly after, the dinner being over, the three men separated.

As Mr. Barnes was about to leave the main dining-room, one of the servants handed him a note. Supposing it to be from Mr. Randolph, he opened it at once, and was surprised and chagrined to read:

"When Mr. Barnes next plays the eavesdropper he should be careful to observe whether a mirror reflects both sides of a *portière* which he might suppose would conceal him.

"MITCHEL."

"The devil take it," muttered Mr. Barnes. "I wonder at what point he discovered my presence. Was that last part, about his having warned all the dealers, thrown in gratuitously for my benefit, and to lead me to suppose that some one else stole the stone? If so, why does he now let me know that he saw me?"

CHAPTER XIII.

MR. BARNES GOES SOUTH.

MR. BARNES now began some researches into the past history of Mr. Alphonse Thauret. Obtaining the date of his first registry at the Hoffman House he found that to be about a month before the train robbery occurred. Finding the expressman who had brought his baggage to the hotel, it transpired that it had been taken from an English steamship, yet the name Thauret did not appear upon the list of passengers. As it was certain, however, that the man must have arrived by the ship, it was evident that "Thauret" was an alias. Mr. Barnes copied the ship's list for future reference. A search for the name Rose Mitchel was fruitless, though extended to the passenger lists of all arriving steamers for two months prior to the murder.

Believing that Mr. Thauret must have some communication with foreign friends, and hoping to obtain some clue by the post-marks of any such letters, Mr. Barnes arranged an espionage of the man's mail. But though the hotel clerk reported to him daily for several weeks, there was not one foreign letter. As to money, Mr. Thauret appeared to be well supplied, paying his board-bills promptly with checks upon a neighboring national

bank, in which it was ascertained that he had deposited to his credit several thousand dollars.

Thus after a long investigation, Mr. Barnes was chagrined to admit that he had discovered nothing save that Mr. Thauret had come across the ocean under an assumed name, and even this meagre knowledge was a mere matter of inference.

Though baffled in this direction Mr. Barnes had been more successful in another effort which he essayed. This was a line of investigation which he inaugurated, hoping to discover the whereabouts of the child Rose Mitchel, who was so skilfully kept in hiding. He had first instructed Lucette as to the part she was to play, and that young woman, anxious once more to stand well with her employer, had exerted herself to her utmost, entirely succeeding in her mission. This was to obtain some of the writing of the child. "Go to the house again," Mr. Barnes had suggested, "and get into conversation with that same servant who met you at the door on your first visit. Then in some manner obtain a specimen of the child's writing. An old copy-book would be just the thing." Lucette carried out these instructions to the letter, and by bribing the servant girl at the school obtained exactly what the detective had suggested, a copy-book in which little Rose Mitchel had practised writing.

Armed with this, and selecting a specimen, which seemed best suited to his purpose, Mr. Barnes next bribed the mail boy at the Fifth Avenue Hotel to examine all letters addressed to Mr. Mitchel until he should find one

in the same hand. It was not until early in March that this patient work resulted in success. Then one day the boy reported to Mr. Barnes that the expected letter had at length arrived. The post-mark indicated that it had been mailed at East Orange, New Jersey.

"So that is where the little bird is hidden," said Mr. Barnes to himself when this information reached him. Summoning Lucette, he sent her to East Orange with these instructions:

"Now, my girl, I 'll give you another chance to redeem yourself. You are to go to East Orange and find that child. The most promising plan is through the post-office. I will give you a note to the postmaster that will aid you. Should a letter be sent to the child either by Mitchel himself or by Miss Remsen, you will learn of it through the postmaster. The rest of course will be simple."

"But suppose," said Lucette, "that the child's letters are directed under cover to the parties with whom she is living? What then?"

"Why, stupid, that is what I send you down there for. As the postmaster is an acquaintance of mine, I could get the address, should it reach him, without having you there. But that is only a faint hope. We know that the child is in East Orange. East Orange has just so many houses. You must examine every one if necessary. Now go, and if you don't find the child, I have no further need of you. I give you this commission partly as a chance to redeem your other mistake, and partly because

you have seen the child once and could recognize her."

"I 'll find her," said Lucette, and she departed.

A week later Mr. Barnes was in New Orleans, where he devoted himself to discovering, if possible, the early histories of Mr. Mitchel and the murdered woman. Weeks passed and he made no progress.

One morning in the latter part of April he was feeling somewhat despondent over his ill success, when, as he glanced listlessly through the *Picayune*, the following paragraph caught his eye :

"Mr. Barnes, the celebrated New York detective, is in the city and stopping at the St. Charles Hotel. It is believed that he is in search of a desperate criminal, and probably the news-loving world will soon be treated to one of the famous detective's clever elucidations of some mysterious crime."

This both annoyed and puzzled Mr. Barnes. He had not told any one his true name, and could not guess how the reporters had found out his identity. Whilst he was thinking of it a card was brought to him which bore the name

"Richard Sefton."

He directed that the gentleman should be shown to his room, and soon after a man of about thirty-five, with dark complexion, black hair, and keen hazel eyes, entered, bowing politely and saying :

"This is Mr. Barnes, I believe."

"Be seated, Mr. Sefton," said Mr. Barnes, coldly, "and then tell me why you believe me to be Mr. Barnes when I am registered as James Morton."

"I do not believe you to be Mr. Barnes," said the other, coolly seating himself. "I was inaccurate in using that expression. I know that you are Mr. Barnes."

"Oh! You do! And how, pray, do you know that I am Mr. Barnes?"

"Because it is my business to know people. I am a detective like yourself. I have come to help you."

"You have come to help me! You are very kind I am sure. But since you are so very clever, perhaps you would not mind telling me how you know that I need help, and in what direction."

"With pleasure. You need help because, pardon my saying it, you are working on a case in which time is precious to you, and you have already wasted about six weeks. I say wasted, because you have learned nothing that will aid you in your search."

"In my search for what?"

"Mr. Barnes, you are not over-cordial. There should be some fraternal courtesy between us. I have come to you as a friend, honestly wishing to aid you. I have known that you were in the city for some time. I have heard of you of course. Who in our business has not? Therefore I have spent a great deal of spare time watching you. I did so simply to notice, and perhaps to learn something from, your methods. In this way I became acquainted with the fact, first, that you are interested in

the name Mitchel, and secondly in the name Leroy. I have simply put the two together and jumped to the conclusion that you are trying to learn something about Leroy Mitchel. Am I right?"

"Before I reply to you, Mr. Sefton, I must have more assurance of your good-will and responsibility. How do I know that you are a detective at all?"

"Quite right! Here is my badge. I am in the department here."

"Very well so far, but now how can you prove that you have any good reason for assisting me?"

"You are a hard man to help, I declare. Why, what object but a friendly one can I have?"

"I am not prepared to answer that at present. Perhaps I shall be able to do so later."

"Oh, very well! You can look me up all you want to. I can stand it, I assure you. But really I did want to help, though of course I have no right to intrude. As you say you do not need me, why I——"

"I did not say that I would not accept your aid. You must not think me ungracious. I am simply a detective, and careful from habit. I certainly should not speak confidentially to a man that I meet for the first time, and so disclose any of my own purposes. But it is different with you. You must have had a definite idea, by which you expect to give me assistance, or you would not have come here. If you are earnest and honest, I see no reason why you should not disclose the main purpose of your visit at once."

"If only to prove my honesty, I will do so. I believe you are looking for Leroy Mitchel. If so I can tell you how to find him in a few hours, or at the worst in a day or two."

"You know of a Leroy Mitchel, who is now in this city?"

"I do. He is over in Algiers, a worker in one of the car houses. He is a common drunken brute, and that is the only reason why there would be any difficulty about finding him. When he is sober he is easy to see, but as soon as he gets some money he is off on another spree."

"Do you know of a woman by the name of Rose Mitchel?"

"Certainly. That is, I did know such a woman once. But she has not been in New Orleans for years. At one time any one could have given you her address. I see now that this man is the one whom you want, for once he passed as this woman's husband."

"You are sure of this?"

"Positive."

"When and where can I see this man?"

"He works in the shops of the Louisiana and Texas Railroad over in Algiers. You can find him through the foreman."

"Mr. Sefton, it may be that you have given me information which will be of service to me. If so you will not regret it. I will myself examine into the matter. For the present, if I do not make a confident of you, you must attribute it to caution rather than to distrust."

"Oh, I am not easily offended. I would act in the same manner in your place. But you will find that I am your friend. You can count on me to aid you on demand. I won't trouble you again till you send for me. A note to head-quarters will reach me quickest. Good-morning."

"Good-morning, Mr. Sefton, and thank you." Mr. Barnes extended his hand, feeling that perhaps he had been unnecessarily discourteous.

Mr. Sefton took it with that genial smile of friendship so common to the native Southerner.

Left alone, Mr. Barnes at once prepared for a trip to Algiers, determined not to let any more time be lost. He reached the shops just after the men had knocked off for luncheon. The foreman, however, told him that Leroy Mitchel had been at work in the morning, so he waited patiently.

When the men came back to resume work, the foreman pointed out a man who he said was Leroy Mitchel. The fellow had a bad face, and if ever he was a gentleman he had sunk so low through drink that no evidence of it remained in his appearance. Mr. Barnes went up to him and asked when he could have a talk with him.

"Now, if you pay for it," replied the man insolently.

"What do you mean?" asked the detective.

"Just what I say," said the other. "We get our pay here by the hour, and if you want my time why you 'll have to pay for it at union rates," and he laughed as though a good joke had been propounded.

"Then," said Mr. Barnes, taking in the kind of a man with whom he had to deal, "I 'll engage you on a job that I have for you, and pay you double wages as long as I use you."

"Now you are talking," said the fellow. "Where 'll we go?"

"I think I 'll take you to my hotel." And thither they proceeded. Up in his own room again, Mr. Barnes felt at ease, whilst his companion certainly made himself comfortable, selecting a rocking-chair, and putting his feet up on the window-sill.

"Now then," began Mr. Barnes, "I want to ask you a few questions. Are you prepared to answer them?"

"That will depend on what they are. If you don't ask impertinent questions, or ones that I think I ought to get more than double wages for answering, why, I am with you."

"In the first place, then, are you willing to say whether you ever knew a woman who called herself Rose Mitchel?"

"Well, rather. I lived with her till she broke me."

"Do you know where she is now?"

"I don't, and I don't care to."

"Suppose I were to tell you that she is dead, and that she had left a hundred thousand dollars which is unclaimed?"

The man jumped to his feet as though shot, and stood staring at the detective. He gave a long, low whistle, and a keen, tricky gleam came into his eye, which Mr. Barnes noted. At length he spoke:

"Are you giving me this straight?"

"I am telling you the truth. The woman is dead, and that amount of property is where I can get it for the man who can prove that he is entitled to it."

"And who would that be?" He waited eagerly for the reply, and Mr. Barnes saw that he was playing trump cards.

"Why, Mr. Mitchel, that is what I am down here for. You see, I thought the party would be willing to pay me a good commission for proving him the heir, and that is why I am hunting him up. I started out with the idea that I might find her husband. He would have a claim."

"I see." Saying which, he sat down and seemed lost in thought. The detective deemed it well to wait for him to speak again, which he did.

"See here," he exclaimed; "how much do you want for getting this money for me?"

"I cannot get it at all unless you are the woman's husband," replied the detective.

"Well I am her husband. Did n't I tell you I lived with her till she broke me?"

"Yes, but are you legally married to her?"

"Why, to be sure. Don't I tell you I am her husband?"

"Then, in the name of the law, I arrest you," said Mr. Barnes, suddenly rising and standing over the man.

"Arrest me," said the fellow, jumping up, pale with fright. "What for?"

"Rose Mitchel has been murdered, and the man who killed her has confessed that he was hired to do it by you."

"He is a blasted liar."

"I hope so for your sake. But as you admit that you are her husband, you are the man we are looking for. I 'll have to take you to New York."

"But, I say," said the fellow, now thoroughly alarmed, "there is a big mistake here. I 've been lying to you ; I 'm not the woman's husband, and my name is not Mitchel."

"That won't do, my man. I had you pointed out to me by Sefton, the detective here."

"But he is the very man that hired me to pass off as Mitchel to you."

Mr. Barnes chuckled as he found his ruse successful. He had suspected all along that the New Orleans detective was trying to lead him off on a wrong scent, and now thought he saw a chance to turn the tables upon him and get some valuable information.

"That is a very thin story," said he, "but if you will tell me all you know, perhaps I may believe you."

"You bet I 'll give you the whole story straight, to get out of this scrape. In the first place, my name is Arthur Chambers. I was up in the world once, had money, and was respectable. But drink changed all that. Now anybody can buy me for a few dollars, and that is what Sefton did. He came to me about a week ago, and told me that a detective was down here from up north nosing around for this Mitchel. He said it was important to an employer of his up in New York to have this detective balked ; that he was hired to do it, and to make him

lose time; that time, in some way, was an important item."

"You say," interrupted Mr. Barnes, "that Sefton told you he was hired by some one in New York to throw me off the scent?"

"That 's what he said," replied Chambers. Mr. Barnes easily guessed who was employing Sefton, and once more he paid the tribute of admiration for the caution and ingenious scheming of Mr. Mitchel.

"Go on," said the detective.

"There an't much more to tell. Sefton hired me to play off that I was Mitchel, and he gave me a cock-and-bull yarn to feed you with about a woman named Rose Mitchel."

"What was that story?"

"Say, look here," said Chambers, his confidence and cunning returning as he felt himself out of danger of arrest, "you don't want that fairy tale. You would rather have the true story, would n't you?"

"Certainly."

"Well, I 'm an old-timer, I am. There an't much that 's happened in the Crescent that I could n't remember, if I was paid for it."

"See here, my man, you are not dealing with Sefton now. You tell me what I want to know, and if I find it is true, I 'll pay you for it. But if you play any tricks, I 'll make it warm for you."

"That 's all right. Suppose I begin by telling you that this Rose Mitchel, that you say was murdered, was known

down here chiefly as Rose Montalbon. 'La Montalbon,' she was generally called."

"La Montalbon?" repeated Mr. Barnes. "Then, was she an actress?"

"Actress? Well, I guess she was, considerable. But not on the stage. No, she kept a gambling-den on Royal Street. Fitted up like a palace too, and many a young fool has lost his last dime in that house."

"But what about Mitchel? Do you know whether he was connected with her in any way?"

"I can't give you that dead straight. There was some mystery there. I used to go to the Royal Street place, and I knew Mitchel in a sort of way. He was always hanging around there. Then there was a while that he did n't show up, and then he turned up again and was introduced as La Montalbon's husband. There was a story going that he had married another girl and deserted her. A young Creole I think, though I never heard her name."

"Did you know anything about a child, a girl?"

"That was another queer part of it. There was a girl, little Rosy. Some said it was the Creole's, but La Montalbon always claimed it was hers."

"What became of Mitchel?"

"About a year after he passed as La Montalbon's husband he skipped out—vanished. Several years after that there was another sensation. The child was kidnapped. La Montalbon offered big rewards to recover her, but she never did. Then about three years ago her place began

to run down ; she lost money, and finally she too disappeared."

"If this story is true it may be quite important. Do you think you could identify this man Mitchel ? "

" Well, I don't know for certain. But see here, come to think of it, there were two Mitchels, and both named Leroy too."

" Are you sure of that ? "

" Pretty sure. They were cousins. The other fellow was younger. I did n't know him myself. He was a Young-Men's-Christian-Association sort of a boy, and not quite in my line. But I sort of remember hearing that he was in love with the Creole girl. But say, I 'll tell you who can give it to you straight as a shingle."

" Ah, who is that ? "

" An old man named Neuilly. He knew all about the Creole, and so must know about the Mitchels. I think he was in La Montalbon's power. She knew something about him and blackmailed him, as she did lots of others. Now that she is dead, you might make him open his mouth."

" Very good. Get me his address, and then see what you can find out about the other Leroy Mitchel, the good boy. Discover what became of him and I 'll pay you well. Meanwhile don't let Sefton know that you are not carrying out his scheme."

" Say, pard, I tumble to you now. You suspected Sefton and you played your cards to draw me out. Well, you did it neat, and now I 'm with you. Good-day. When I see you again I 'll have some news for you."

The following day Mr. Barnes called at the bachelor home of Mr. Neuilly. The handsome old man received him in stately fashion and courteously asked the detective to explain his mission.

For a moment Mr. Barnes did not know how to proceed ; he at last said :

" Mr. Neuilly, I have come to ask your aid in the cause of justice. I have hesitated to do this, not wishing to disturb you. That I do so now is due to the fact that every other resource has been tried and has failed me."

" Proceed, sir," said the host, with a courteous bow.

" I am seeking certain information about a woman who was known as La Montalbon, and——" An instantaneous change came over the face of Mr. Neuilly. His hospitable smile of welcome vanished. He rose erect and stiffly said :

" I know nothing of that woman, and must wish you a very good morning," with which he deliberately began to walk from the room. Mr. Barnes for a moment was nonplussed, but saw that he must act quickly or lose all chance of gaining any information from this man.

" One moment, Mr. Neuilly," he said ; " you certainly would not refuse to help me convict her murderer." As he expected, the last word brought him back.

" Murderer ? Did you mean to intimate that she has been murdered ?" Saying this he stopped for a second, and then slowly returned and sat down again.

" Rose Montalbon was murdered in New York some

months ago. I believe that I am on the track of the guilty man. Will you aid me?"

"That depends upon circumstances. You say the woman is dead. That alters my position in this matter very much. I had reasons, good ones to me, for refusing to converse with you on this subject. But if the woman is dead, the objections vanish." Mr. Barnes thought he understood. Here was one of those who had been ruled by fear, as Chambers had said.

"What I want from you, Mr. Neuilly, is very simple. You either can or you cannot give me the information that I wish. Did you know a man named Leroy Mitchel who was at one time this woman's husband?"

"I knew him very well. He was a scoundrel of the deepest dye, for all that he had the manners of the polished gentleman."

"Do you know what became of him?"

"No; he left this city suddenly and has never returned."

"Did you know little Rose Mitchel?"

"Many a time has she sat upon my knee. This man was her father. He wronged one of the sweetest little girls that ever lived."

"You knew this girl? Knew her name?"

"I did."

"What was it?"

"That is a secret I have guarded for too many years to be willing to yield it now to a stranger. You must show me good reasons for giving it to you before I tell it."

"I will explain. This man Mitchel is now in New York. He is about to marry a sweet, good woman. Yet I think that he murdered Rose Montalbon, or Mitchel, to get her out of his way. I think that she was blackmailing him. Besides, he has his child with him."

Mr. Neuilly started up and paced the room for some time, much agitated. Finally he stopped and said:

"You say he has the child with him?"

"Yes. Here is her likeness." He handed Mr. Neuilly the photograph made by Lucette.

Mr. Neuilly looked at it, muttered "very like! very like!" then remained silent for some moments; finally he said:

"And you think he murdered this woman, Montalbon?"

"I do."

"It would be terrible to hang that child's father. What dishonor! What dishonor! But Justice is Justice!" He seemed to be talking rather to himself than to Mr. Barnes. Suddenly he turned and said:

"I cannot tell you the name for which you ask. But I will go with you to New York, and if this story of yours is true, I will move heaven and earth to see justice done. That villain must not ruin another young life."

"Good," exclaimed the detective, delighted with the result of his visit.

"One more point, Mr. Neuilly. What do you know of the existence of another Mr. Leroy Mitchel?"

"I never met him, though I knew of him. There was a mystery about that, which I never could unravel. I

think that he loved this same girl. At any rate shortly after she died, he lost his reason, and is now in an insane asylum. Of course he cannot help us."

Mr. Barnes, after arranging where to meet Mr. Neuilly, returned to the St. Charles to make his own preparations for going north. Up in his room he found Chambers awaiting him.

"Well," said the detective, "what have you learned?"

"Nothing that will please you, I am sorry to say. Only I have found the other Mitchel. He is a lunatic, in an asylum out in the suburbs. But the fellow up north is your man sure. This one, they say, went crazy because his sweetheart gave him the mitten."

"Did you find out the woman's name?"

"I could not do that. It seems as carefully hidden as though it was a state secret. That gives you an insight into what the Creole pride is."

"Very well. I think you have worked for me faithfully. Here is a hundred dollar bill. Will that satisfy you?"

"Perfectly. I wish you luck."

An hour later a telegram was handed to Mr. Barnes, which read:

"Have found the child.

(Signed) Lucette."

In the afternoon Mr. Barnes started for New York accompanied by Mr. Neuilly. That same night Mr. Robert Leroy Mitchel received a telegram which read:

"Barnes off for New York. Has old Neuilly with him. If the last named knows anything, you must be careful.

(Signed) SEFTON."

After reading this, Mr. Mitchel completed his toilet, used the despatch to light a cigarette, and then took his *fiancée* to the opera.

CHAPTER XIV.

AN INTERRUPTED WEDDING.

During the time spent by Mr. Barnes in the South, his spies in New York discovered little, or nothing, against the persons whom they had been charged to watch. Indeed from the standpoint of a detective, the actions of all had been most uninteresting. The usual round of social affairs, the customary number of theatre or opera parties, the regular afternoon teas, in fact the ordinary routine life of the man or woman of fashion, was all that could be observed. Yet of course these weeks did not pass without any occurrence of note. The chief one perhaps, was the naming of the day, upon which the wedding of Mr. Mitchel and Miss Remsen was to occur. This was May 5th, the very day upon which Mr. Barnes would reach New York with Mr. Neuilly.

Thus, fate seemed hurrying on a climax which was to occur on the wedding day. In New Orleans a detective was seeking evidence upon which he hoped to convict a man of the heinous crime of murder, whilst in New York a beautiful woman was bestowing her faith upon this same man, and with the assistance of many fingers, preparing to bedeck herself in bridal finery for his delectation. Meanwhile, the man himself acted most

unconcernedly. He seemed to consider himself beyond the risk of danger, and he accepted his happiness as does one who had honorably earned it.

Of much interest to us, in the light of fast approaching events, was the curious conduct of Dora Remsen during this period. It will be remembered that Mr. Randolph had lost an opportunity of declaring himself, and that he warned the young lady against Mr. Thauret as one not to be trusted. This kind of advice, it is to be presumed, is offered by the one giving it, with some idea, however distant, that it may be accepted. Yet the histories of many lives would show that only a small percentage of similar advice has ever been received with acquiescence. Indeed, it might also be said that many persons have been hurried into each other's arms by the interference of wiseacres, when perhaps, if left to themselves, they would have drifted apart. At least so it seemed in this case. Mr. Thauret had become not only a constant visitor at the home of the Remsens', but he seemed a welcome one. He certainly was a most entertaining man, and his manners utterly unapproachable. He had travelled, and not only had seen the world, but had observed it, which is another thing. The result of this was that he had a fund of narrative always at his disposal, and his conversation was so attractive that he easily monopolized the attention of a *coterie* at any social gathering. Mr. Randolph noted with growing uneasiness that Dora was always one of the group who listened to these tales. What disturbed him most, was that after the greatest amount

of time spent and wasted, in seeking some flagrant defect in the man's character, he was at last compelled to acknowledge to himself that he had nothing against Mr. Thauret, except a prejudice. But that prejudice was as great, if not greater, than ever. He determined at length to speak to Mr. Mitchel about it, and did so one afternoon when the rooms were crowded, his rival being as usual the centre of an attentive group.

"Mitchel," he began, "how the deuce did that fellow Thauret get into this family?"

"Dora met him somewhere, I believe. Why?"

"Why? Can you ask that?"

"Can I? Why certainly I can. I did ask you,—Why?"

"I declare, Mitchel, you are either as blind as a bat, or else you have eyes only for Miss Emily. Don't you see the danger that the younger sister is in, associating with that man?"

"Well now, Randolph, to be candid, I must admit I do not see the danger. What is it?"

"Why, suppose—suppose she fell in love with him? Suppose she married him!"

"Well, what then?"

"What then? You would provoke a saint. You talk as coolly about that child's throwing herself away on a—a nobody—as though we were discussing a shot at billiards."

"Randolph, my friend, let me give you a bit of advice. When a man wishes to marry a girl, there are two impor-

tant rules which he must observe, and both of them I believe you have neglected."

"What do you mean?"

"Before I explain, let me ask you a question. Am I right in supposing that you wish to marry Dora yourself?"

"Well, that is rather pointed. However, I will admit the truth. I would be happy to have her love."

"Very well. I will tell you those two rules. The first is, 'Never speak ill of your rival.' The second is, 'Don't be too late asking for the young lady.'"

Randolph looked at Mr. Mitchel a moment intently, then offered his hand, which was grasped warmly. He said simply "I thank you," and walked over to the group where Dora was. After awhile, taking advantage of an opportune lull, he leaned over her and said in an undertone:

"May I have a few words of conversation with you?"

She looked up at him, evidently surprised at his tone, and asked:

"Is it important?"

"Very," he replied succinctly, and excusing herself to the company she permitted him to lead her into the next room, where she sat beside him on the sofa, to which he invited her with a motion. After a brief silence, during which each thought intently, he began:

"Miss Dora, I wish you to listen to me, if you please, to the end. I think you know that I love you." He paused just a moment, whilst she trembled slightly,

blushed, and drooped her head. He continued: "I have never told you this before in words, I know, but you are a woman, and must have read my heart long ago. You are all so clever at that sort of thing. I am only a man, and I have not been able to read yours at all. I really do not know whether you care for me or not. Once I thought that you did, but of late—but no matter, I will not go into that. In brief, then, I have only to say that it would make me supremely happy to know that you would some day be my wife. In exchange, I offer you a lifelong devotion. And now—I think—that is all I have to say. Dora—little sweetheart—do you, could you trust yourself to me?"

He had gently taken her hand whilst he spoke, and the fact that she had neither resisted nor withdrawn it had encouraged him to the more affectionate terms which he used at the end of his love speech. She hesitated awhile, then gently disengaging her hand, and looking at him with just a suspicion of a tear in her eye, she said almost in a whisper:

"Do you care very much?"

"Very much! I cannot tell you how much." He tried to recapture her hand, but she eluded him. Again she asked a question:

"Money is not an object to you, in this?"

"Miss Remsen, you insult me."

"No, no!" she said quickly, "you misunderstand. I did not mean my money. I can't explain, yet you must answer my question. Would you mind if—oh, how shall

I say it? Suppose I did something that cost you a lot of money——"

"Oh! I see," exclaimed Mr. Randolph, brightening up. "You mean you are extravagant. Don't let that bother you a minute. You may cost me as much money as you can possibly spend. I will never complain."

She seemed much relieved, but she did not speak at once. Her eyes wandered away from him, and following her gaze he saw them reach and rest upon Mr. Thauret. A jealous pang darted through his heart. He was about to speak when she turned to him and said with suppressed emotion:

"I hope you will not be angry with me, and that you will not think evil of me. There is something I cannot explain, yet which, if I could, you would not object to. But until I can tell you about it—I cannot—I cannot—give you an answer. Would you—would you be willing to wait?" There was a tone of entreaty in her voice.

"How long?" asked Mr. Randolph, still irritated, and wondering if the something which she could not tell was in any way connected with Mr. Thauret.

"Would you mind—if I asked you to wait till—well, say the New Year?"

"That is a long time, but if it is your will, I must."

"Oh, thank you!" That was all she said; but there was a hint of rapture in her speech, there were tears in her eyes, and for one brief ecstatic moment he thought that there was love in her heart, and that that love was for him. With an impulse that he could not control, and

which she did not check, he drew her to him, and softly touched her lips with his own. He felt satisfied, though she left him immediately and went at once to Mr. Thauret, who greeted her with evident warmth. There is something, magnetism if you please, but a something that binds two true lovers' hearts so that an impulse in the one excites an answering sensation in the other. The oddest fact in this connection is, that though one may fancy himself deeply in love, he is not, till he has received one of these instantaneous messages which Cupid ticks over Love's telegraph. After that he is enslaved. His better judgment is gone. He will argue in the lonely hours of the night that he has made a mistake, that the woman is not destined to make him happy, that she has this, that, or the other fault, but it counts for nothing, save that he suffers. That one stab has slain his manhood, and he cannot control his actions. As soon as he meets the woman again, act as she may, his love is aflame once more. She may ill-treat him, she may ignore him, it matters not; she attracts him.

Thus it was with poor Mr. Randolph. Throughout the many weeks that followed he suffered much. He called his love all the unpleasant things that jealousy could suggest. But invariably the recollection of that one moment, when she had seemed in that indistinct, indescribable way to have yielded her whole self, her whole soul to him, would flash across his mind, and at once his reason was silenced, and he would say:

"She could not have done that if she were false. She loves me, but there is something that I do not understand which makes her treat me so. She told me so, and said that when she could tell it to me, I should not mind. Well, I must be patient and wait. I must trust her; she must be, she is, true!" And then gradually all the old doubts would creep over him again, and the suffering would be as poignant as before.

It was about a month after the conversation related, when a somewhat similar one occurred between the same young lady and Mr. Thauret. He had called one afternoon, when Dora was alone, and so had the field to himself. He spoke to her of all those things which he had found most interesting to her, and she was enjoying his society very much, when suddenly, as twilight approached and the room grew slightly darkened, he began to touch upon a more tender theme. He spoke of himself, of the wandering life that he had led, of the fact that he was alone in the world, without a living relative. He mentioned, as though it were of no importance, that he was of noble blood. Then he drew a touching picture of a man who, whilst really of a most affectionate nature, was compelled to live a loveless life, because there was none to whom he could turn for that sort of comfort. Then he asked her gently, very gently, whether she had ever thought upon the subject herself, and whether she had felt a yearning for the companionship of one who would be all in all to her. His pleading was very pretty to listen to, and she heard him as though much impressed

but her reply was not exactly what he evidently hoped it would have been.

"Oh, yes," said she, "I have thought of all that in a vague sort of way. But, you see, I have been in love with my beautiful Queen, for so long that I cannot imagine a life without her. And yet"—there was a tremor in her voice—"I am going to lose her soon. She will go away for awhile, and then I fancy I shall feel that loneliness of which you speak. So, if you want to hear my real ideas upon that subject you must wait till after the wedding." She said this last with a tone of deep meaning, and Mr. Thauret seemed to accept her remark as a hint, for he changed the subject. Shortly afterwards he went away. As he walked down the avenue, there was almost a triumphant smile upon his face. This, however, was not reported to Mr. Barnes, for the spy was behind and could not see his face.

It was only a few nights after this that Mr. Mitchel was walking home from the club, accompanied by Mr. Thauret, when the latter turned the conversation upon the Miss Remsens.

"They certainly are charming girls," said he, "but one would need to be rich to afford the luxury of marrying one of them. I suppose they have nothing until the death of the mother."

Mr. Mitchel thought that he understood the object of the question, and for reasons of his own was glad to reply to it.

"O, not at all," said he. "The father left each of them

a handsome sum, fifty thousand in fact, which they are to receive as soon as married. The bulk of the money, of course, went to the widow, but her interest is only for life, and then it is to be equally divided between the girls. I think it is somewhere near half a million."

"You are a fortunate fellow. I wish I had your luck."

"My dear Thauret, can a man of your intelligence believe in such a stupid thing as luck? It no more exists than its antithesis, ill luck. Every man succeeds or not, according to his own skill in guiding his life. Now you envy me my marriage to Emily, when certainly her sister Dora is just as charming, and richer, too."

"Miss Dora is charming, true; but that does not make me a successful suitor. But what do you mean by saying that she is richer?"

"Why, you see, her sister is devoted to her, and has promised her a gift of ten thousand dollars the day she marries, upon one condition."

"And that condition is?"

"That the husband shall be satisfactory to her."

There was a silence for several minutes, finally broken by Mr. Thauret:

"Well, in the light of your approaching marriage, which will make you the only man in the family, I presume your influence would count. If I should wish to marry Miss Dora, I suppose you would favor my suit?"

"That is not a new idea to me, I assure you. All I need say is that when you gain Dora's consent, you shall have mine."

"Thank you." Mr. Thauret said this with suppressed emotion, and after that neither man spoke until they said good-night at Mr. Mitchel's hotel. Mr. Thauret, upon reaching his own room, smoked a cigar, and blew little ringlets over his head, thus occupying himself till long after midnight. He seemed to be building castles, and from the satisfied expression on his face, they must have been grand ones.

Thus matters stood when the day dawned upon which the marriage was to occur. Everything was bustle and confusion at the home of the Remsens. The bridesmaids arrived early, helped to deck the bride, and then stood around in delighted admiration. Dora was in ecstasies. Two magnificent bouquets had been sent to her, one entirely of carnation pinks, from Mr. Randolph, and the other a fine assortment of cut-flowers, amongst which were three beautiful Calla lilies, tied with long white satin ribbons. These were the gift of Mr. Thauret. She stood admiring the flowers for a few moments, then tenderly untied the pinks, and, taking a few of each color, made a small bouquet, which she pinned just at the opening of her dress near the throat. Thus they were near enough to exhale a fragrance of which she would be continually conscious. Just before leaving the house, however, she took the Callas and carried them with her in her gloved hand.

Before the day was over a little tragedy occurred, of which she was not only innocent, but unconscious. In the throng entering the church her pinks were swept from

her breast, and in her excitement she did not observe her loss. Mr. Randolph, however, the groom's best man, noted carefully that she carried flowers, and that they were not his. Subsequently she, in reply to a question from him, admitted who had sent them, and though he made no remark, he slept little that night. Thus easily men suffer.

Emily was dressed—but there, why should I attempt to describe what only a Worth could have furnished, and only wealth could afford? If you can imagine the most beautiful shade and quality of pearl-colored silk, and add to that the finest of lace, and to that the most marvellous profusion of tiny ribbon bows, then, as I hinted, recall that the genius of Worth designed the garment, perhaps you will imagine all that I could tell you. At least I may say that as the bride entered the church on the arm of that magnificent man, Mr. Van Rawlston, who, as her father's dearest friend, had been invited to take his place, every woman present took one lingering look at the woman and her gown, and then turned to her neighbor to express her admiration. Moreover, I will say that the sum of all that praise was not enough fully to describe Emily Remsen, who looked every inch "a royal queen," as Dora delightedly told every one for years afterward.

But after the bridal party had passed, people naturally looked for the groom, and they wondered not to see him. Whispering occurred, and inquiries were made without satisfactory response. Some thought that there had been

a mistake, and that the signal had been given to the bride and her friends too soon. It was an awkward situation, because of course, once having reached the altar, they could not turn and leave the church again. Consequently they simply stood and waited. Every one at length grew so nervous, that save for the organ, there gradually stole over the whole edifice a solemn silence. People were awed, and fearing at last as the minutes passed and still the groom did not appear, that something dreadful either had or was about to occur, they almost held their breaths. A few intimate friends went out on tip-toe, but the door leading to the vestry-room was guarded by a man in livery, who would say nothing but that no one could be admitted.

Meanwhile an exciting scene, though a brief one, was being enacted behind that door. Just as the two parties were about to start on their way to the altar, a carriage had driven up furiously, and from it had alighted Mr. Barnes. He quickly entered the building, and went straightway into the vestry-room, brushing aside the man at the door. Once in the presence of the groom and his gentlemen attendants, he astonished them by saying :

" Thank God, I am not too late."

" Are you quite sure?" said Mr. Mitchel, with provoking calmness.

"I have come here to stop this wedding," said the detective, a little excited.

" You mean, to delay it. That you are doing now, as I should be on my way to the altar to join my bride."

"I tell you, I come to stop this wedding altogether, and——"

"One moment, Mr. Barnes. There is no time to lose, and I do not wish you to speak too openly. Let me talk for you. You have reasons, which I can guess, for wishing me not to be married. Am I right?"

"I have said as much."

"If I can prove to you that you gain nothing by hindering this ceremony, will you allow it to proceed, and then act as you may please afterward, instead of now?"

"Of course, but that is impossible."

"Nothing is impossible, Mr. Barnes; read that if you please."

Taking from his pocket a folded paper, he handed it to Mr. Barnes, who took it nervously, read it, and looked up amazed.

"This is an outrage, Mr. Mitchel, and——"

"And you have given me your word not to further interfere at this time. If you will meet me at my hotel at two o'clock, I will answer whatever other demands you may have upon me. I think you know that you may trust me to keep the engagement. Now, gentlemen, we will proceed." Saying which he and his friends filed out of the room and down the aisle of the church, much to the relief of the immense throng awaiting them, leaving Mr. Barnes utterly discomfited. The ceremony then proceeded without further delay, and in half an hour Mr. and Mrs. Leroy Mitchel were taken in their carriage to the Fifth Avenue Hotel. Mr. Barnes did not wait to see them

leave the Cathedral, but hurried away almost immediately after having read the document which Mr. Mitchel had handed to him. This was a certificate of marriage dated the day before, and performed at the Mayor's office. Thus, whatever reason the detective had for stopping the marriage, the telegram from Sefton had enabled Mr. Mitchel to once more outwit Mr. Barnes, by simply allowing a civil contract to antedate the religious ceremony.

CHAPTER XV.

MR. MITCHEL EXPLAINS A FEW THINGS.

IMMEDIATELY upon his arrival in New York, Mr. Barnes went to his office. Here he was slightly surprised to find Lucette.

"Well," said he, tersely.

"I came here," said the girl, "so that I could report to you the minute you got here. There is no time to lose."

"Why, what is up?"

"Your plan about my getting information from the East Orange post-office did not work. The man said that though he would like to serve you, he was afraid it might be construed into tampering with the mails. That you would need an order from the Postmaster-General. I went to work then on the other line, and began a systematic examination of every house in the place. It was hard work, but at last I found the child. You don't want details now, because she has been taken away again. Mitchel went down yesterday and brought her to New York."

"Why did you not follow him and see where he took her?"

"I did, and this time I am sure he did not suspect that I was after him. He took the child to the Remsens'"

"To the Remsens? What can that mean?"

"I don't know. But Mitchel and Miss Remsen are to be married at St. Patrick's Cathedral at ten o'clock this morning."

"Not if I can stop it," replied the detective, and he hastened up to the church with the result told in the last chapter.

Promptly at two o'clock Mr. Barnes presented himself at the Fifth Avenue Hotel accompanied by Mr. Neuilly. They were asked to go up to Mr. Mitchel's apartments, and there they were greeted by that gentleman as affably as though they had been of his wedding party. Indeed he began the conversation in rather a jocular way, saying:

"Ah! Mr. Barnes, delighted that now I can entertain you more at my leisure. This morning you see I was in a great hurry. You called at a very inopportune time, and I am afraid that I was rather abrupt."

"Mr. Mitchel, I am not in the humor for nonsense. This is a very serious visit, I assure you. This gentleman is Mr. Neuilly, of New Orleans, and he has come all this distance to aid the cause of justice."

"Delighted to meet you, Mr. Neuilly, I am sure," said Mr. Mitchel, approaching and extending his hand so cordially that the elder man took it, though he had thought that he would rather handle hot coals than the hand of the man who he supposed was guilty of wronging the daughter of his old friend in the South. Mr. Mitchel did not seem to notice his agitation, but begging them to be seated, he himself took a comfortable chair and continued:

"Now, Mr. Barnes, I am wondering if it is possible that you have traced my wife's ruby as far away as New Orleans?"

"I have not been looking for it. I suppose you know why I wished to stop your marriage?"

"Why, no; not precisely. What was your reason?"

"If you do not know it, why did you get married yesterday?"

"I might reply that it is often done, but I will be honest and tell you that such a procedure never occurred to me till I heard that you were coming home. Then, you see, I thought that you might take the idea into your head—you do get odd notions, you must admit—that I ought not to get married just now. I knew you well enough to believe that if you did harbor a thought of that nature you would not hesitate to interfere. I did you no injustice there, for that is just what you tried to do, you see. Consequently, as I had set my heart on being married in the Cathedral precisely at the time appointed, I just took the bull by the horns and persuaded my little girl to marry me yesterday. That is my story in full, I assure you. Now, what was your object?"

"You know it very well, and all this yarning is pure bluster. You know well enough that I wanted to use Miss Emily Remsen as a witness against you, and that I could not do so after she became Mrs. Mitchel."

"Oh! Well, yes; I admit that idea was in my mind, Mr. Barnes. And now—what are you going to do about it?"

"In the first place I shall arrest you for abducting the child, who was in the care of Rose Montalbon." Mr. Barnes expected some surprise from his adversary but he was disappointed.

"Yes," said he, "and then?"

"Then I shall compel you, through the court, to reveal her present hiding-place, and to produce her."

"I think you might have trouble to do that, were it not that I do not object to it. In fact we will reverse your order of things and begin with the production of the child. Emily!" In answer to his call, his wife came into the room, bringing with her a beautiful girl. Her husband arose, and taking the little one by the hand, coolly approached Mr. Neuilly, and said, "Rose, this is Mr. Neuilly. He was a dear good friend to your mother, and has come all the way from New Orleans to see you. I think he would like to kiss you, would you not, Mr. Neuilly?"

That gentleman seemed much moved. To him the vision of loveliness standing demurely before him, brought back the memory of the long ago. She reminded him of another little girl whose growth into budding womanhood he had watched tenderly, having in his youth loved her mother, the grandparent of the child before him. His suit had not been successful, and for love of that woman he had remained a bachelor all his days. Now he could see changing expressions in this young face, which reminded him of both of those women who had been dear to him. Without a word, he drew her towards him, and kissed her once. Then he arose, still holding her hand, and

lead her towards the door of the next room; there he kissed her once more, this time on the forehead, and then bade her wait, shutting the door after she left him. Then turning with a fury in his heart, and repressed passion in his voice, he exclaimed:

"Mr. Mitchel, either you are the most contemptible villian on the face of this earth, or else there is some hideous mistake here. Explain it, man, I must know at once!"

"Must, Mr. Neuilly, is a word that I seldom obey. But I know how you have suffered, and have no desire to prolong this interview a moment more than is absolutely necessary. First, however, I must understand the situation. What do you and Mr. Barnes here think it to be?"

"I will explain briefly," said the detective, "provided your wife will withdraw."

"My wife is now a part of myself," said Mr. Mitchel, proudly placing an arm around her as she stood beside him. "You need not hesitate to speak. She has promised to share my life with me, to take me as I am. She will begin the task at once. Go on."

"So be it. I know now that Rose Mitchel, who was murdered, was known in New Orleans as Rose Montalbon, and that she was your wife. I have also discovered that you deceived a young Creole, the mother of that child who has just left us. That when you deserted her, she died broken hearted, whilst you allowed the Montalbon woman to take the girl and pass it off as her own, though later she was kidnapped by you. The wom-

an suspected that you would wish to marry again, and swore to prevent it. Her appearance upon the scene just as you were to become a husband, must have been a menace to you. Do you see the point? Murders have been committed with less motive. I think therefore that I have sufficient evidence upon which to arrest you."

"You might arrest me upon less evidence," said Mr. Mitchel. "It is done every day. But to convict me you would have to prove all this."

"How do you know that I cannot prove it?"

"For the very simple reason, that your facts are all wrong."

"Very good, Mr. Mitchel, but you will have to prove that."

"I am fully prepared to do so. To begin with, according to your story, I abducted this child. There you are only partly right. I did take her away from the Montalbon, and I did it as you might say, by stealth and force. But I had the fullest right to do so."

"You admit then that you are her father?"

"On the contrary, I deny it, and there is the weak point in your story. Your argument all depends upon my having been guilty of wronging that girl's mother, and the Montalbon's having me in her power. In point of fact, I am not her father, and the Montalbon had but a slim chance to blackmail me."

"But you admitted to me that you allowed her to do so. That you gave her a large amount, in jewels."

"That is true, yet I did not submit to blackmail."

"Mr. Mitchel I seldom forget a man's words. You told me that day in the vaults that you were in the woman's power, that she could ventilate certain scandals which might break your engagement. Yet now you say you were not in her power and that you did not submit to blackmail. How can you explain such conflicting statements?"

"Two conflicting statements may both be true, provided a lapse of time occurs between them. When I admitted that I had been in the power of that woman, I thought so, therefore I spoke the truth. When I say now that I was not, I also speak truly. In the interval, I have learned to appreciate the character of the woman who is now my wife. That is all. I know now that the Montalbon's story blazoned forth to the world, would not have affected her faith in me, if I had told her my own version."

"For heaven's sake, gentlemen," interrupted Mr. Neuilly, "stop this argument, and get down to the facts. I am impatient to know the truth."

"Yes, Roy," said Emily, "why not simply tell the story as a narrative, and let the whole truth be known?"

"That is what I mean to do. I have only been enjoying a little sparring with Mr. Barnes. But it is cruel to Mr. Neuilly, who I hope will pardon me. To begin at the beginning, I must go back to my youth in New Orleans. I was in love with a beautiful young girl." Here he pressed his wife's hand, and she returned it, as though to say that she understood. "I think I need not mention

the name of Rose's mother, Mr. Neuilly, unless you have already done so."

"Heaven forbid that I should have betrayed the secret," said the old man.

"I did not suppose that you had, for I know you to be a true man, though I have never met you before. This statement may surprise you, but it is true. I am not the man for whom you take me. He is now in a lunatic asylum, whilst I am his cousin. I know it is supposed that I am the crazy man, but that is an error, promulgated by the Montalbon to serve her own ends. The facts then are thus: Whilst a boy at school I loved my girl companion, little Rose's mother. Just before I left the South to enter Harvard, I told my little girl sweetheart—she was then but fifteen—that I would marry her upon my return. This was my first love, and hers. I had a cousin, older than myself by ten years, handsome and wealthy, but a gambler, and addicted to heavy drinking. This woman Montalbon, as you know, kept a gambling den and naturally my unfortunate cousin was a constant visitor at the house. One night whilst intoxicated with wine, she persuaded him to marry her, a clergyman being called in and a ceremony privately performed. He became entirely sober only after several days had passed, and then had entirely forgotten about the marriage. The scheming devil, Montalbon, did not remind him of it, but by patient work insidiously persuaded him that he should be a married man. She even suggested a bride, none other than my little sweetheart. Her object in this was twofold,

money and revenge. By leading my cousin into a bigamous alliance, with her own marriage certificate as a weapon, she could readily extort money from him. Her revenge was to be against the family of my little sweetheart, against whom she thought she had a grievance. Her plotting was entirely successful. My cousin was handsome, I was away, and once he had become thoroughly acquainted with the young Creole's charms, he became so ardent a suitor, that at length she listened to his pleading and married him. Then he was in the power of the Montalbon, and she bled him for five years, by which time little Rose had been born.

"Meanwhile I had completed my college career, but had not returned to New Orleans because of my deep disappointment upon learning that my sweetheart had married another man. At this time I was in Paris, when one day I received a piteous letter from the girl-wife telling me that the blow had fallen, that the Montalbon had produced her marriage certificate and claimed her husband, thus dishonoring the daughter of her enemy. The letter also begged my forgiveness for the wrong done to me. I read between the lines and recognized the cry of a broken heart, the bleat of a lamb left to die on the frozen plain. I hurried home with but one thought uppermost, to have revenge upon my cousin. I arrived too late. Not only was the girl dead, but my cousin had disappeared.

"I heard that he had gone out West, and thither I followed him. I would get track of him from time to

time, but it seemed fated always that he should have just left a place when I confidently expected to come up with him. Thus five years passed, and at last I did meet him. I at once charged him with his crime, and asked for revenge. He laughed at me and refused to fight. I then warned him that I should take his life at the first chance that offered, when I could do so either under seeming provocation, or else where I could not be suspected."

"Are you not admitting," interrupted Mr. Barnes, "that you harbored a murderous spirit?"

"Mr. Barnes, if all men were punished for their thoughts, the criminal class would be greatly enlarged. You cannot call me to account for anything except my acts. At last my chance came. I followed him one dark night as he went off prospecting in an entirely new direction; we were in a mining country. He tramped most of the night and I pursued. By dawn we were miles away from a habitation. I then made myself known to him, and once more asked him to fight it out. He saw that I was in earnest, and that he was simply compelled to battle for his life. Under these circumstances of course he fought, as the worst coward must do, when driven to desperation. He decided to use pistols, though I wished to try our cause with knives. I confess that I wanted the satisfaction of stabbing him again and again. I wanted to see his life's blood flow at each stroke. It seemed to me tame to stand off at a distance and send one little leaden ball in his direction. Still I admitted his right of choice, and determined to aim as accurately as possible

and to send my bullet straight. You see I did not think of my own life. I had made this vengeance my one object, and after accomplishing that, I thought there would be nothing more for me to do. Consequently I expected to kill him easily, and I did not care if his bullet found my heart or not. Perhaps I hoped it would. Just as we were standing up and preparing to fight, something occured that almost completely unnerved me and changed the whole result. He lowered his pistol and said :

"'Wait a moment; I have a favor to ask. I feel certain that you will kill me. You have been seeking my life so long, that I am sure you will get it. It is fate. But I too have suffered in the last five years. The favor that I ask is, that if I die you will promise to get my child out of that fiend's clutches.'"

"'Your child,' I gasped. 'I thought it died.'

"'That was the Montalbon's lie. The little girl lived, and she took it. I have made a will in favor of my child, leaving her all my wealth; you will find it in my coat. Oddly enough, I named you as executor. I knew that you had loved the mother, though, as God is my judge, I did not know it when I married her. But I am ready if you are.'

"Thus we stood up and fired at each other. The startling news just received made my aim bad, for instead of hitting him in the heart, as I could easily have done, my bullet struck him in the head. He fell, and I rushed towards him, to discover whether he was badly hurt. He was bleeding profusely. and I hastily bandaged up the

wound, and so stopped the flow of blood. I then went on to the next mining camp beyond. We returned with a litter, and took him back. There was a man amongst us who claimed that he had studied medicine, and he attended my cousin. He removed the bullet, and found that the wound was not very deep, but the skull was fractured. He was ill for two months, and then slowly recovered his health. But his reason was entirely gone. I took him to New Orleans and placed him in an asylum, and there he has been ever since."

"Very good, Mr. Mitchel," said Mr. Barnes. "But what proof have you that you are not the father, and the lunatic the innocent cousin, as so many believe?"

"Why, in the first place, though we had the same name, we are totally unlike in feature. I think Mr. Neuilly will admit that he would not have recognized me, and he knew the guilty man. However, we will take that up later. I have no fear of not proving my identity. Too many people in New Orleans know me. To continue my tale, I determined to get possession of the child. I knew that the Montalbon would resist, and that I would find it difficult to prove my story. More than all, I knew that I could not obtain legal possession of her without disclosing the secret of her birth, which I wished to avoid for her own sake, as well as for her mother's. I therefore stole her openly in the streets. Detectives were sent out to search for me, but perhaps Mr. Barnes will testify that I am not much afraid of detectives. Perhaps, too, he will understand better now why I know something about detective

methods. I led them a dance for two years, until in disgust they abandoned the search. Then I went abroad, for I must tell you that as long as I was hounded I remained close at hand. I enjoyed the excitement. It made me forget, or at least it gave me occupation. I remained in Europe until my recent return to New York. It was not very long after that, when I received the letter from the Montalbon, and the photograph which I showed to you. I recognized the picture, though of course I should not have known the signature, which was Rose Mitchel. I did not fear the woman, but I expected some enjoyment at her discomfiture when I should tell her to do her worst. I was not prepared for what occurred. When she met me she began by saying:

"'I have not the least idea of attempting to blackmail you, though perhaps I could do that. But I have that to sell which I think you would be glad to buy.' I asked what it was, and she told me:

"'A certificate of marriage between your cousin and the child's mother. A certificate of marriage between him and myself, antedating that, and another certificate of marriage between myself and another man who was alive at the time that I inveigled your cousin into marrying me.'"

"Great heaven!" exclaimed Mr. Neuilly; "if she had those papers they would prove that her marriage to your cousin was illegal, and that would make the marriage to Rose's mother perfectly regular."

"Exactly so. I paid the woman ten thousand dollars,

or the equivalent of that sum, for those documents. Were they not worth it?"

"Indeed, indeed they are. I would have given twice the sum."

"Now let me show you the audacity of the woman. She told me that in case I should refuse to pay her price, she intended to claim me as her husband, exhibiting her certificate, and leaving me to prove, if I could, that she had married my cousin and not myself. This, you see, would have been most unpleasant, and as the papers were well worth the price, in clearing the name of my cousin and his wife and child, I paid over the money."

"I must again ask you," said Mr. Barnes, "for proof that you are not the woman's husband."

"Does not the fact that she sold me those papers indicate that?"

"Not at all," replied the detective. "Supposing you to be really her husband, wishing to be married to Miss Remsen, you would readily pay the woman her price for the paper which proved that your marriage to her had been fraudulent. You might have found it difficult to prove the existence of her first husband without knowing his name, even though she had given you the hint that there was such a person."

"I declare, Mr. Barnes, you are a doubting Thomas. But I will give you one more bit of evidence." He went to his desk and returned with some papers. "Here is a confession which I exacted from the woman at the time that I made the bargain with her. You see, it confirms my

story. But even *that* you might think manufactured. Here perhaps is better proof. This," handing it to Mr. Neuilly, "is the certificate of the marriage between my cousin and the Montalbon. As is sometimes done, you see, the woman has pasted the likenesses of herself and my cousin upon the paper. Now, Mr. Neuilly, I ask you, is not that the man who was known to you?"

"You are quite right, Mr. Mitchel. I recognize the face perfectly. This is the man I have all along supposed to be a consummate villain. Now I must confess that he was more sinned against than sinning. His one crime was drinking, and the entanglement which wrecked his wife's life and his own was but a wicked plot of which he was innocent. I am glad that it is so, as it leaves the dear little girl without the danger of hereditary taint."

"Come, Mr. Barnes," said Mr. Mitchel, "what have you to say now?"

Mr. Barnes's reply was calculated to startle his hearers, but seemed to have little effect. He said:

"Mr. Mitchel, who do you think killed Rose Mitchel?"

"I don't think I am bound to answer," replied Mr. Mitchel, quickly.

"I wish you a good-afternoon," said the detective, dryly. "Will you go with me, Mr. Neuilly?"

Before the old gentleman could reply Mrs. Mitchel interposed:

"Don't go, Mr. Neuilly. You have seen nothing of Rose yet, and besides we would like you to attend our reception to-night."

"Ha! Ha! Mr. Barnes! Is she not worthy of being my wife? She takes your witness away from you, for I think you will stay, will you not, Mr. Neuilly?"

"It will be a joy to do so. Mr. Barnes, under the circumstances I know you will excuse me, and forgive me, will you not?"

"Certainly. You are right to stay. I will leave you all to your happiness. And I hope it will last. Good-day," with which he left them.

"Really it is too bad," said Mr. Mitchel, "but these detectives are always so sanguine. Just think of it, Queen, he thinks, or he thought, perhaps, would be more correct, that you were a murderer's wife. What do you say, eh?"

For answer she kissed him gently on the forehead, and then went out and brought back Rose.

CHAPTER XVI.

MR. BARNES DISCOVERS A VALUABLE CLUE.

IMMEDIATELY after the wedding Mr. Mitchel and his bride started west, intending to spend their honeymoon in the Yosemite Valley, having promised Mrs. Remsen and Dora, however, to join them in the White Mountains before the end of the season. About the first of July the Remsens and the Van Rawlstons went to Jefferson, New Hampshire, a small town along the base of the Pliny Range of mountains, from which a magnificent view of the Presidential Range, only ten miles away, is to be obtained. About the middle of the month Mr. Randolph determined to visit the same place, and was intensely disgusted on alighting from the stage, which reaches the Waumbeck Hotel about eight o'clock at night, to be greeted familiarly by Mr. Alphonse Thauret. It was evident that his rival did not intend to lose any chance to win the hand of Dora Remsen

If one has anything of the artistic in his nature he could scarcely fail to enjoy himself at Jefferson. The town is practically a single road, well up the side of the mountain range. Thus the hotels all look out over a long and beautiful valley. From the piazza of the Waumbeck, on a clear day, no less than thirty-five mountain peaks can

be easily counted, the Green Mountains over in Vermont being visible as a distant line of blue, and not in the total.

Of course the most conspicuous and most admired peak is Mount Washington. One who has not visited the region might suppose that he would soon become sated with the sight of the same mountains day after day. This is a great error. All the mountains, and especially Mount Washington, are ever presenting new aspects. All changes of atmosphere produce corresponding variations. The shadows of passing clouds, the effects at sunrise or at sunset, the moonlight, the partly cloudy weather when the top of the mountain is hidden, the mists, and the rain, all offer such totally different coloring and picturesque effects that the artistic eye is never tired.

Dora was an artist in every fibre of her being, as one would know who listened to her talking to Mr. Randolph half an hour after his arrival, as they sat together on the piazza. In his delight to be with her and to hear her, he would have forgotten the very existence of Mr. Thauret were it not that he sat near them in the rotunda at the end of the piazza, and so shared the entertainment that she offered.

"What a pity," she was saying, "that you did not come up yesterday. You have missed the grandest sights that mortal ever beheld. I suppose on your trip up you saw nothing beautiful in the rain-storm that we had this afternoon?"

"Nothing whatever," said Mr. Randolph. "However it may have been here among the mountains, the rain did

not make the valleys more attractive. Indeed I thought it simply a beastly day."

"What a mistake that you were not here instead of in the horrid cars. Why, I tell you that I have n't words with which to describe the magnificent pictures that I have enjoyed. Yet I am about to try. You must not lose it all, you know. May I tell you about it?"

"Assuredly; I shall be delighted."

"Well, then, to begin; look out over the valley. What do you see?"

"The moonlight shedding a beautiful ray over the lake."

"Exactly," said Dora, laughing heartily. "That is just the funny mistake I thought you would make. That is not a lake at all. It is mist, or clouds rather. In the morning if I had not told you, you would have been astonished to find that your lake is all trees and meadows. To begin, then; about four o'clock it began to cloud up. That was very interesting. The sun was shining brightly here, but we could see that it was raining hard over in the direction of Lancaster. Slowly it began to come toward us. Some of the boys made wagers as to how soon it would rain here. Then one of the proprietors came out, and surprised us all by saying that it would probably rain over on the Presidential Range before it did here. This seemed extraordinary to us, you know, because why should it skip right over us and go to the big mountains?"

"Well, did it? It does seem impossible."

"That is exactly what occurred. You see, it is like

this: Whenever a storm comes from Lancaster way, the clouds when they get here are divided by the Pliny Range, and pass on either side, leaving us dry. Then they strike against the sides of the Presidential Range, and roll back into our valley. It was a curious sight, I assure you, to see the clouds flying in exactly opposite directions."

"Well, but after all, there could not have been any great beauty in the rain. It must have blotted out all the view."

"Yes, but think how odd it was to find all these tremendous peaks suddenly gone. Not a mountain in sight in any direction. But then, the thunder. Oh! that was grand. The way it rolls about and reverberates gives one a good idea of a great battle. There was something afterwards that carried out this similarity, too, which I wish I could describe. It was after the storm had passed and the bright-setting sun shone forth. Try to see the picture. Imagine yourself sitting just where I am now, and looking toward the Presidential Range, the sun setting red behind us. Mount Washington had shaken the clouds from his head, and was encircled by a gorgeous halo, in the form of a brilliant double rainbow. One end of it seemed to come up right out of the valley there, whilst the other disappeared behind Starr King Mountain. The flying clouds, still black and heavy, whirled swiftly along, hanging low, and, with the sun approaching the horizon, made shifting shadows across the base of Mount Washington, whilst between the rifts the red rays of the sun striking different parts made beauteous tintings among the

green and the brown of trees and rock. Oh, if an artist could only have seen that. But then it would have been useless, for the hand of man could not paint such grandeur. It was in the foreground that the resemblance to the battle-field was to be seen again. Every here and there stray bits of clouds disentangled themselves from the tree-tops and rose up smoke-like till one could imagine them to be from thousands of camp-fires. Oh! it was simply wonderful."

"It was indeed," said Mr. Thauret; "and your description brings it all back again to me."

"Then the beautiful long twilight," Dora continued, almost unheeding, "that was lovely. Slowly these stray bits of mist met and joined others, till as the darkness came and the moon brightened, that beautiful sheet of water, for after all your lake is real water, accumulated, and there it is. At least you can enjoy that."

He did. But what he enjoyed more was the simple happiness of being with her. After a short time, however, he was deprived of that, for Mrs. Remsen claimed his attention, and took him up to the ball-room to introduce him to some of the many young women who were dancing with each other and with boys of fourteen for want of better partners.

If Mr. Thauret annoyed Mr. Randolph by being at this resort, the former gentleman was none the more pleased at his arrival. Being left alone with Dora, and construing her present mood to be one favorable to his wooing, he determined to speak to her before the other man might find

a chance. Moving his chair nearer hers, he began, getting to his subject without much circumlocution.

"Miss Dora," said he, "do you recall a conversation that I had with you one day? I mean about loneliness, and the longing one has for companionship?"

"Oh, yes," said she, frankly, "why? Do you wish to continue it now?"

"If you please. You remember you said you would be better able to do so after your sister's marriage."

"Because I thought that I would miss her so much and be lonely myself, was not that it? Well, of course I have missed Queen very much, but I have scarcely been lonely. You have taken care of that, and I am sure that I am very grateful to you. You have been very nice to me."

"You think so? You admit that?" He spoke eagerly.

"Why, yes! Why not, since it is true?"

"Of course, but then you know so many young ladies hide their feelings. I mean suppression of all emotion is considered so necessary in a woman in these days."

"Suppression!" and she laughed heartily. "Now do you think that I could ever be suppressed?"

"No, indeed, and certainly I hope that you never will be. But if you have not been lonely, perhaps you have thought some of that other subject, love, I mean."

"Oh! That!"

"Yes. That is one question, supreme to me, about which I wish to have your views. Do you think you would be happier or unhappier,—if you were married?"

"That is a question. It would depend upon—my husband, would it not?"

"Suppose that we were——"

"Don't call names, please. I could n't suppose such a thing. I have promised not to."

"Promised not to, I don't understand?"

"I mean that I have made a bet. You don't think I am horrid to bet, do you? Of course you don't. Well, I have made a curious bet with Bob, Mr. Mitchel, you know. I call him Bob now, and I used to do it sometimes before. That was when I wanted him to do anything for me. It made him feel like one of the family. Well, to tell you about my bet. You see, sometimes, when Emily was out, Bob would play make love to me. He said it would be good practice for me; would teach me the ways of the world and all that sort of thing. Oh! Bob is a curious man, but he is great sport. Don't you like him?"

"Immensely. But you have not told me yet about your bet."

"I am coming to it. Well, one day when he was making love to me, and I was doing my best, suddenly he burst out laughing, and said: 'Dora, I 'll bet you 'll be engaged within six months of our marriage.' 'How much?' said I. 'As much as you like,' said he. I asked him if he would make it a thousand dollars, and he whistled and called me a little gambler. But I don't think it was gambling, because I was to have a certainty. Of course I wanted the stake to be a large one. So it

was agreed, and he wrote it down on paper. I 'll show it to you sometime if you like. If I am not engaged before the 1st of January, Bob will have to pay me a thousand dollars."

"And you mean to win that bet?"

"Indeed I do. I am young and can afford to wait that long, I am sure. There will be time enough afterwards to get a husband."

"Then it would not make any difference how anxious a suitor might be to have his reply at once?"

"No, certainly not. If a man did not love me enough to wait a few months for his answer I should think myself well rid of him. Besides it would give me a chance to study him."

"Suppose—but no—I do ask you. Miss Dora—Dora—I love you madly, passionately, and——"

"Well, don't say any more. If that is true, and you love me madly, passionately, why then you will surely wait till January for your answer." This was said rather curtly, and Mr. Thauret's hopes sank, but rose again to fever heat as she said, very softly: "There, I did not mean to hurt you. You must not think me hard. But I must win that wager. Not so much for the money as for the gratification of proving to Bob that I have some control over myself. Surely, if you truly love me you will not begrudge me that satisfaction?"

"No, no, sweet one. Have your own way. I 'll wait. Only say that there is some chance of my succeeding."

"Why, of course, every one has a chance. But I must

not tell you how great yours is, because if I did I would not be winning my bet fairly. And I must say good-night," with which she left him. Her last words lingered with him, and he took comfort. For what could she mean but that his chances were good, since if otherwise, how could the telling prevent her from winning her wager? Nevertheless, as the weeks went on, he tried many times to get a more definite reply from her, but never succeeded. Still he hugged the cherished hope to his heart and waited as patiently as man could.

Randolph was simply miserable all the time. Whenever he was with Dora she was good to him, kind to him, and often used tender tones that thrilled his heart. But he too failed to get anything from her, save the old request that he should be patient and wait. He too waited, but not patiently.

Meanwhile, in New York, Mr. Barnes was still burrowing into everything that seemed to have any connection direct or otherwise with the mystery, or mysteries, that baffled him. Of one thing he had satisfied himself beyond all doubt. That was that Mr. Fisher had not been implicated in the train robbery. His spy had found that he had been absent from the city during three days at the time of the crime, but this very fact had been shown to be his safeguard. By some skilful work the man discovered, that during that time he had simply been off shooting ducks, in a part of the country where it would have been impossible for him to be an accomplice. This simple fact should not have been hard to discover, were it

not that Fisher had kept his trip a secret. This for some time puzzled the detective, but finally he followed him out of the city, and practically accompanied him on a similar outing, after which he learned that his sister was morbidly opposed to all killing, whether for sport or for a livelihood. It was to humor this idea that her brother made his excursions in secret. The spy learned from the man from whom the dogs were hired that Mr. Fisher had used them in December. So that left him out of the score, or at least so it seemed. It was still possible that he was implicated in the ruby robbery, though save that he was present there seemed nothing against him. Mr. Barnes did not entirely leave him out of the account.

Thus practically the detective made no progress, and was chagrined to be compelled to admit it. Finally, however, an idea occurred to him, upon which the more he dwelt, the more fascinated he became with it. To put it into practice, however, he felt that he must await the return of Mr. Mitchel. He thought he would injure his cause by seeking him and so disturbing him during his pleasure trip.

The Mitchels did not keep their promise to go to the White Mountains, but on the contrary prolonged their western travel, so that it was November before they were at home again, and temporarily quartered at the Fifth Avenue. A few days after, Mr. Barnes sent up his card, and as usual, was cordially received.

"Any news of my wife's ruby?" asked Mr. Mitchel, grasping the detective warmly by the hand.

"No, Mr. Mitchel. I am sorry to say that I am utterly unable to prove any of my theories about that. But I have come to a set determination, and one that to you may seem a peculiar one. I have come to ask your assistance in the murder case."

"Why, certainly, I will help you. Did I not tell you so at the very outset? Have I not always been willing to talk freely to you?"

"You have, but as long as I thought that you yourself might have committed the crime, how could I come to you to ask you to assist me?"

"Then I am to understand that at present you do not suspect me?"

"I have come to that conclusion at last, and wish now that I had done so sooner."

"Would you mind telling me why you have altered your mind? You have told me so much that seemed to implicate me, that I am curious to hear the other side."

"Certainly. I overheard your wager. Then came the robbery, and then the murder. Later there was a second jewel robbery; all of these crimes occurred within the limit which you set. One of them of course you committed. It seems more probable that you stole the single ruby, for in doing that you committed a crime for which you could not be punished, especially since you have married the lady. Even before, she would willingly have testified that it was understood between you, and that it was simply a trick to win a wager. Is not that correct logic?"

"Correct logic? Yes. Of course I admit nothing as to facts."

"Either or both of these robberies are secondary to the murder. That I have determined to unravel if I can. At present I think the train robber and the murderer was one and the same person. Now, there is one clue which I have not been able to follow, but which, if pursued, I am certain will lead me straight to the criminal."

"And that is?"

"The button which I found in the room. That is significant. It is too great a coincidence that it should match your set, not to have an explanation that would shed light upon this case."

"How do you expect me to assist you in that direction?"

"As long as I thought you guilty, I believed that you had lied when you said that the seventh button of the set was the Shakespeare pin which your wife had. That is why I thought it of importance to recover it; sufficiently so, to send my spy, Lucette, into the house with instructions to obtain it if possible. Now that I believe you innocent of the murder, this thought has recently come to me. When I first told you about this button, before you would speak about it, you asked me to allow you to examine it. After doing so, you gave it back to me, with a cheerful smile. If that button had been evidence against you, I see now that it would have required a powerful nerve to appear so unconcerned, and especially to return it to me. The question then that I wish you

to answer is, what was it that you saw on that button, which satisfied you that it was not of your set?"

"In the first place, Mr. Barnes, I knew that there were but three like it, the other three having different heads, and the seventh being the Shakespeare button. Thus as I knew that all the buttons were in my possession, I felt safe."

"But in the second place," said the detective, "there was a distinct difference between the buttons, and by that you were even more assured. Am I not right?"

"Mr. Barnes, you deserve to succeed, and I hope you will. I will aid you all that I can. You are right. There is a difference in the buttons. Have you yours with you?"

"Yes, here it is;" saying which, he took it from his pocket-book.

"Keep it a moment. When Miss Remsen ordered these buttons, she directed that a tiny initial should be adroitly carved in the hair of each of the Romeo and Juliet buttons. In the former she ordered an "R." She calls me Roy. And in the others a "Q." I call her Queen. This would escape ordinary observation, but after seeing it with a lens, one may readily find it with the naked eye afterwards. Now take this lens and examine your button, just at the base of the hair, near the neck. So! What do you find?"

"By heavens," exclaimed the detective, "This is most important. This is a Juliet, and if one of your set, it should have a "Q," on it. I believe that there was an

attempt to make that letter, but the tool must have slipped, and so it is a poor result, a chip in fact, which mars the continuity of the letter. I doubt if with the eye alone as you looked at it that day, when I first showed it to you, that you saw any letter at all."

"You are correct. I simply looked for the "Q," and not finding it, was satisfied."

"This is serious. This button evidently was made by the same hand that made yours. It was spoiled, and another cut to replace it. The man who carved it, or the person who became possessed of it, must and shall explain to me how it came into the room where the murder was done. You must tell me now where these buttons were bought."

"I will do so upon one condition."

"Name it."

"That whatever you discover, you will tell me before you act, and that you will not act before January 1st unless absolutely necessary."

"You mean as to making an arrest?"

"That is precisely what I mean. You need not fear to make the promise. I will guarantee that your man shall not escape. I know him."

"You know him?" Mr. Barnes was astonished that Mr. Mitchel should make such an admission.

"Yes, I know him. That is, I am morally certain that I know him. I will tell you at once, that having the knowledge that I myself was innocent, I have had an advantage over you, and I have been hunting down this

man all these months. I have good circumstantial evidence against him, but not enough to warrant an arrest; at least not yet. If you could follow this clue, and find that it leads to the same man, we could convict him."

"Will you give me the name of the man whom you suspect?"

"No! That would materially weaken our case. We must get the same result without collusion. No, you work alone and work quickly, for I particularly wish the case to be completed by January 1st."

"Why so?"

"It is the day upon which my wager is to be decided, and I shall give a dinner party, at which I anticipate some fun. By the way, don't forget that you won a dinner from me on a wager. Accept an invitation to dine with me January 1st, and if you can then convict our man, you shall be most welcome."

"I shall bend every energy to that end. But now tell me the name of the jeweller from whom the buttons were procured."

Mr. Mitchel then wrote down the name of a Paris firm, also giving their address. Handing the slip of paper to Mr. Barnes, he took another sheet and continued writing.

"Why, Mr. Mitchel," exclaimed Mr. Barnes, "This is the same firm from whom your jewels were bought; those I mean, which are similar to the stolen set. I have already communicated with these people, and they sent me word that they knew nothing."

"Yes, I know. That was by my instruction," saying which Mr. Mitchel smiled, and Mr. Barnes once more discovered that he had been fighting against a man who thought of everything. "You see," continued Mr. Mitchel, "I knew that you saw the name of the jewellers on the bill of sale. What more probable than that you should apply there for information? Now, my one object throughout has been, not to defeat justice, but to have time enough elapse for me to win my wager. Therefore, I immediately sent a cable to these persons, 'Answer nothing signed Barnes till you hear from me.' Rather a long cable despatch, but then I don't mind a few dollars. Of course, my letter to them made them shut their mouths to you. It was very simple. However, I myself have not been able to get satisfactory facts from them, and I think it needs a person actually on the ground to ferret out this thing. I believe you are just the man for the case. This letter will give you their assistance, and here is a check for five hundred dollars for expenses."

Mr. Barnes would have refused, but Mr. Mitchel insisted, that from that time on, Mr. Barnes should consider himself regularly employed on the murder case, "though, of course," said Mr. Mitchel, jocularly, "you are still free to work out the robberies."

The two men shook hands at parting, and one would have said that they were separating after a mutually satisfactory interview.

CHAPTER XVII.

A NEW YEAR'S DINNER PARTY.

THE 1st of January arrived, and Mr. Mitchel had heard nothing from Mr. Barnes. Inquiry at his office was met by the simple statement, that "The chief is out of town." When he would be back, or where a communication would reach him, could not be learned. A few days before, however, a formal engraved invitation to the dinner party had been mailed to his home address. Mr. Mitchel was annoyed at not having any notification of whether or not the detective would be present. However, he was compelled to go ahead, and depend upon the slight chance that at the last moment he would appear upon the scene. He hoped that this would occur, as otherwise, his scheme for the evening would be incomplete.

The dinner was to be served at ten o'clock that night at Delmonico's, where a private room had been engaged. It lacked ten minutes of the hour for sitting down, and all the guests had arrived, except Mr. Barnes. These were: Mr. Van Rawlston, Mr. Randolph, Mr. Fisher, Mr. Neuilly, who had decided to spend the winter in New York, Mr. Thauret, and several other gentlemen.

It lacked barely half a minute of ten when Mr. Barnes

was announced, and entered in handsome evening dress. Mr. Mitchel's face wore a look of triumph as he saw him, and he hurried forward to receive him. Every one present understood why the detective was invited, for it was by this time well known that a wager was to be decided at twelve o'clock. After the exchange of greetings, Mr. Mitchel gave the waiters the order to open the doors of the dining-room, and in the moment's interval managed to get a word with the detective.

"Tell me quickly, have you succeeded?"

"Yes, thoroughly."

"Good! Write the man's name on a card, and I will give you one upon which I have written the name of my man."

Mr. Barnes did so. Then they exchanged cards, glanced at them, and grasped each other's hands significantly. The cards bore the same name. With the others they went into the dining-room. Mr. Thauret found himself seated next to Mr. Barnes, whilst on the other side of the detective sat Mr. Fisher.

It need scarcely be said that the dinner was enjoyable and enjoyed, though it must be admitted that all awaited anxiously the hour of twelve. It will be as well perhaps, therefore, to come immediately to the *dénouément*, for which all were assembled. The last course had been served, and coffee and nuts were on the table, when the clock chimed the hour for which all were anxious. Promptly at the first stroke Mr. Mitchel arose. There was a silence till twelve was tolled and then he began:

"Gentlemen, you have all kindly accepted my invitation to see me win a rash wager made thirteen months ago. It is odd, perhaps, that I should have won—for I announce that I have won—when we remember that the time was thirteen months, which number, as we all know, superstitious persons are inclined to connect with misfortune. To show, however, that I do not harbor such childish ideas, I purposely made the time of that length, and, to-night, at the decisive moment, we are thirteen." Here he paused a moment, and one might have noticed that several persons quickly counted those present to test the fact. Continuing, he said: "The superstition in connection with thirteen at dinner is a well-defined one, and the supposition is that one of the number will die within the year. I offer as a toast, therefore, 'Long life to all present—who deserve it.'" The last clause after a slight hesitation, made a decided effect. However, the toast was drunk in silence.

"As some present may not entirely understand what my wager was, I must explain that thirteen months ago to-night I was in a Pullman sleeper with my friend, Mr. Randolph. Mr. Barnes here had just accomplished a neat capture of the criminal Pettingill, who has since been convicted. The papers were praising him, and Mr. Randolph did so to me in glowing terms. I ventured the assertion that detectives run down their prey largely because the criminal class lack intelligence sufficient to compete with their more skilled adversaries. I offered to wager that I could commit a crime within a month and

not be detected within a year thereafter. The amount was to be a thousand dollars, and was accepted by Mr. Randolph. I stipulated for conviction, though had I been arrested within the stated period and convicted afterwards, I should have considered that I had lost the wager. That is why I awaited the arrival of Mr. Barnes so anxiously. I had not seen him for some time, and it was possible that at the last moment he might be prepared to arrest me upon evidence that would later convict me. However, gentlemen, I have escaped both arrest and conviction, yet I committed the crime as wagered."

"You must prove that," said Mr. Randolph; "and, according to our agreement, it must have been a crime which was much talked about!"

"Quite right, my friend, but I shall be able to demonstrate all that. By a curious coincidence a robbery was committed on the very night and upon the same train upon which we made our wager, whilst another robbery was committed almost at the moment when the stipulated month expired. Thus two crimes transpired within the time allowed me, and with both of these my name has been connected in the mind of the detective, Mr. Barnes. Now, that you all may better understand the circumstances, I must go to what I might call the beginning. Years ago certain circumstances in my earlier life gave me an intimate acquaintance with the methods used by detectives, and I then acquired the idea which led me into this undertaking,—that where the criminal has succeeded in escaping actual watching during the commission of his

crime, so that there is no witness to the act, the detective is almost powerless until he learns the object for which the crime was undertaken. Am I not right, Mr. Barnes?"

"To know the object of a crime, of course, is a great assistance, but much would depend upon the attendant circumstances."

"True. The object then is important. From this point I reached the conclusion that if a man approached another, totally unknown to him, at night in a lonely neighborhood, struck him on the head, killing him, and then, unseen, reached his own home, it would rest entirely with himself whether or not he would ever be caught. I wanted a chance to try this experiment; that is, to commit a crime solely to test the ability of the detectives to discover me afterwards. The difficulty was that a gentleman of honor would scarcely wish to engage in such a reprehensible piece of business. For years, therefore, I could think of no way to have my wish, till the merest chance threw the opportunity within my grasp. Waiter, fill up the glasses."

He paused a moment while this was being done. The men went around with champagne, and when Mr. Thauret was reached he asked to have his Burgundy glass filled also. Mr. Mitchel was again speaking when the waiter returned with the red wine, and did as requested. Mr. Barnes also presented his glass for the same liquor, saying in an undertone to Mr. Thauret, "I cannot take too much champagne."

"One of my hobbies," continued Mr. Mitchel, "as you all know, is the collection of jewels. A few years ago I

heard that a magnificent set was offered for sale. A rich East Indian nobleman, so the story goes, had procured the gems as a present to his wife. They were of the choicest quality, and of each exactly two, matched precisely in size, cutting, and coloration. In time he had two daughters, twins, the mother dying at their birth. Eventually these girls grew up and were married, the ceremony being a double wedding. The father took the set of jewels and divided them, giving to each girl, one of each. This greatly diminished their value, for the matching of gems adds to their price. Reverses of fortune tempted one of these women to offer her jewels for sale. They were taken to a Paris dealer, who chanced to be a man through whom I had made many purchases. He undertook not only to dispose of the gems, but to reproduce them with a high order of imitation, so that the woman retained the original settings and continued to wear what her friends supposed to be the genuine gems. I bought the unset stones. Subsequently her sister, learning the secret, and seeing that there was a way by which the jewelry could be retained, whilst the jewels themselves could be turned into money, engaged the same dealer to serve her in a similar way. Of course, I was doubly anxious to obtain this second lot, for by doing so I enhanced the values of those which I had already. I therefore bought them also."

He paused a moment, to allow the company to recover from the surprise at learning that the stolen jewels were his.

"This lot was sent to me through the Boston custom-

house. I instructed the dealer to do this, because I had found that goods can be received with less delay in Boston than in New York. Being notified by my broker there that they were ready for delivery, I went to Boston and obtained them. I placed the wallet in a peculiar satchel which had been made to order for me, and carried it to my room at the Hotel Vendome. Later in the day, I met Mr. Randolph, and went with him to a theatre. He was to return to New York by the midnight express, and I went with him to the depot. As we stood awaiting our turn to purchase tickets, you may imagine my utter astonishment to see a woman pass and board the train, having my satchel in her hand. There could be no mistake whatever, because the satchel was peculiar, both in shape and color. Of course I saw at once I had been robbed. It was useless to go back to my hotel, for that would be time wasted. If by any miracle there were two such satchels, mine was safe in the hotel. I therefore astonished Mr. Randolph by offering to accompany him, and I did so, occupying the same section with him. Whilst I was thinking what action I should pursue, knowing that once the train started my thief would be safe as far as New Haven, Mr. Randolph began to praise Mr. Barnes, and like a flash it came to me that this was my chance. I would rob the thief of my own property. Thus if caught I could not be imprisoned, whilst if not I would not only win my wager, but I would have the excitement and the satisfaction for which I had wished. One thing threatened to upset my plans. Mr. Barnes by

an odd chance came aboard the same coach, was given the section next to ours, and overheard our conversation. This of course I could not have counted upon."

"You did take it into your account though," interrupted Mr. Barnes.

"You mean that I refused to tell Mr. Randolph what I meant to do, saying that I might be overheard, and that I might even be talking for the benefit of a listening detective? True, but I had no idea that this was so. It was merely extreme precaution, and only shows that we can never be too cautious in an endeavor to keep a secret. Later, however, I heard you get up, and peeping through the curtains, I saw you sitting up, or rather lying in a berth opposite, with the curtains drawn. I at once supposed that you must be a detective. My companion was soon asleep, but with a hundred thousand dollars worth of jewels in the balance, I could not sleep. I was busy wondering what I should do. I think though that I must have dozed, for I know that I was startled to discover suddenly that we were not moving. I looked out of our section window—fortunately I was next to it—and found that we had run into the depot at New Haven. Like a flash it came to me that the thief might leave the train here. I was about to get up, when to my astonishment I noticed a man sneaking along by the side of the train. I was on the side opposite to that from which the passengers would alight, and the suspicious actions of the man forced me to watch him. He passed so close to me that I could have touched him had my window been

open, and as he did so the light of an electric lamp disclosed the fact that he had my satchel. The thief had been robbed already. The man approached a coal-bin, and stooping, shoved the satchel behind it. Then he returned to the train and came aboard. I said to myself 'That fellow is an artist. He will remain on board till the robbery is discovered, if necessary, and even allow himself to be searched. Then he will quietly come back and get the satchel and jewels.' Thus it was my cue to act quickly. But if I left the train I knew that the detective would see me. I therefore gently raised the sash, and deftly let myself to the ground out of the window. I quickly took the satchel, ran to the end of the depot, and found a place where I could shove it far under the platform. Then I climbed back into the berth, and after that I assure you I slept very well."

The company applauded this description of how the robbery had been committed, and Mr. Mitchel bowed.

"Wait, my friends, we are not through yet. The woman who had robbed me had the supreme audacity to report her loss, or perhaps we should say, that she was so angry that she became desperate. I have reason to believe that she had an accomplice in this man, and that suspecting him of robbing her, she would have been willing to give testimony against him if caught, and trust to escape herself, by turning State's evidence. When we were running in to New York, Mr. Barnes directed that all should be searched. I enjoyed that, I assure you. It seemed so amusing to look in New York for what I knew

was in New Haven. At the same time I was anxious to get back to New Haven as quickly as possible. With that end in view I invited Mr. Barnes to breakfast with me. I tried to make it appear that I was anxious to have him agree to be the only detective on my track, but in reality I wished to discover whether he would be able at once to place a spy at my heels; that is, whether he had a man at the Grand Central already. This I found was the case. I therefore was obliged to go to my hotel as though having no desire to leave town again. Then, subsequently, I eluded this man by the convenient bridges across the Elevated railroad. I went to New Haven, found the satchel, and then deposited it at a hotel near-by for safe keeping. My object in this was plain. I knew that the robbery would get into the newspapers, and that by behaving suspiciously at the hotel,—of course I was disguised,—attention would be attracted there. This did happen, and the result was that the jewels were given into the custody of the police authorities, the very safest place for them, so far as I was concerned. Gentlemen, that is the story of the crime which I committed. I have only to show my receipt from the Boston custom-house, and my bill-of-sale from the Paris dealer to be able to recover my property. Are you satisfied, Mr. Randolph?"

"Entirely. You have won fairly, and I have a check for the amount with me, which you must accept with my congratulations upon your success."

"I thank you very much," said Mr. Mitchel, taking the check; "I take this because I have immediate use for it,

as you will learn directly. Now I must tell you the true story of the other robbery."

At this all were very much astonished. Mr. Thauret appeared a trifle nervous. He placed one hand over the top of his claret glass, and let it rest there a moment, after first having taken a sip from it.

"You all recall the fact that I was sick in Philadelphia," continued Mr. Mitchel, "at the time of the Ali Baba festival. I flatter myself that that was the most artistic thing that I have done throughout this whole affair. Any one seeing me would have been satisfied that I was truly ill, yet, in point of fact, my cough was brought on by drugs administered to me by my physician at my express desire, and for purposes which I had explained to him. I guessed that I had been followed to Philadelphia, and took care that I should not be too closely watched, as Mr. Barnes knows. Yet I expected that after the affair, Mr. Barnes himself would come to Philadelphia to see me, and my artificially-produced illness was to baffle him. But I am anticipating events. After the train robbery the woman was murdered. By what seemed an odd chance she was in the same house where my wife then lived. I knew that I had been followed from the theatre to that house on the night of the murder. I knew that other circumstances pointed strongly to my guilt. But I had the advantage over the detective, for I knew that the man who had stolen the jewels from the woman, not finding them when he returned to New Haven, must have been furious. Judging the woman by himself, he

would suppose that at least it was possible that she had taken them from the satchel herself. Then on that slim chance might he not have returned to the woman, and, admitting the theft of the satchel, have endeavored to make her confess that she still had the jewels? Failing in this, might he not either in a fit of anger or to prevent her from 'peaching,' as they call it, have cut her throat?"

"You are wrong there, Mr. Mitchel," said the detective. "The woman was killed whilst she slept. There was no struggle."

"Even so, we can imagine the sneak going into the house and killing her that he might search for the gems undisturbed, and also to rid himself of a companion for whom he no longer had any need. At least, that was the view that I took of it, and, more than that, I felt convinced that I knew the man."

At this moment, Mr. Thauret nervously reached forth his hand towards his glass of wine, but before he could get it Mr. Barnes had taken it up and drained it to the bottom. Mr. Thauret seemed livid with wrath, and a dramatic incident occurred, unobserved by the rest of the company. Mr. Thauret turned towards Mr. Barnes and seemed on the point of making a demonstration, when that gentleman just tipped back his chair slightly, and meaningly exposed to the view of his neighbor the gleaming barrel of a revolver, which he held in his hand below the table. This only occupied a moment, and immediately afterwards both men seemed, like the others, simply interested listeners to the narrative.

"When I say that I thought that I knew the man," continued Mr. Mitchel, "I make a statement which it may interest you to have me explain. In the first place, I saw the fellow who hid the satchel at the New Haven depot. Still I obtained but a momentary glimpse of his face, and would not have been sure of identifying him. I will call your attention now to the fact that very slight incidents sometimes lead the mind into a suspicion, which, followed up, may elucidate a mystery. Prior to the train robbery I had met a man at my club one night, or rather I had seen him playing a card game, and I conceived the notion that the fellow was cheating. Within a few days of the robbery I met this man again, on which occasion Mr. Barnes was present, and an interesting conversation occurred. I was standing aside, pretending to be otherwise engaged, but really puzzling over the face of this man, which now seemed to me strikingly familiar. Of course I had seen him at the club, yet despite me, there was an intuitive feeling that I had seen him elsewhere also. In a moment I heard him admit that he had been aboard of the train on the night of the robbery, and that he had been the first one searched. Awhile later he offered to wager Mr. Barnes that various theories which had been advanced as to the thief's method of secreting the jewels, were all erroneous. This one remark satisfied me that the thief stood before me. I had not then heard of the murder. Now it must be remembered that I was ensnared in the meshes of circumstantial evidence myself, so that, besides any duty that I might owe to society, it became of

vital importance to my own safety that I should be in a position to prove this man guilty. I formed a rather bold plan. I made a friend of the fellow. I invited him to my room one night, and then accused him of having cheated at the card game. He at first assumed a threatening attitude, but I retained my composure, and perhaps startled him by proposing to form a partnership by which we could fleece the rich club men. I hinted to him that I really possessed less money than I am credited with, and that what I did have I had taken at the tables on the Continent. He then admitted that he had a 'system,' and from that time we posed as good friends, though I do not think he ever fully trusted me. I learned from him that his partner in the game where I caught him cheating was entirely innocent, and made him promise not to play with him again, for I had discovered that the detectives had been told of this game, and therefore knew that they would be watching both men when playing cards. I preferred to be the partner myself upon such occasions. Having somewhat won the fellow's confidence, I was ready for my great scheme in baffling the detective so that I might win my wager, and at the same time entrap my suspect. I had conceived the Ali Baba festival. I showed Mr. Barnes one day the ruby which I afterwards presented to my wife. At the same time I told him, that if he should come to the conclusion that I was innocent of the train robbery, he might as well remember that I would still have to commit the crime as agreed upon. Then I arranged that the festival should occur on New

Year's night, the very day on which my month would expire. I knew that all this would lead the detective to believe that I meant to rob my *fiancée*, a crime for which I might readily have escaped punishment, with her assistance. There he misjudged me. I would not for treble the sum have had her name mixed up in such a transaction. She knew absolutely nothing of my intentions, though being at that time in ignorance of the details of the train robbery, I left her mind in a condition not to offer resistance to the thief, who she might suppose to be myself. Then, after laying my trap, at the last moment, I baited it by asking my *fiancée* to wear the ruby pin in her hair. I went to Philadelphia, and feigned sickness. Then I eluded the spy and came on myself. Mr. Barnes I supposed would be present, and I had arranged so that if so, he would necessarily be in one of the dominos of the forty thieves. I had invited my suspect to assume the role of Ali Baba, but he shrewdly persuaded some one else to take the costume, himself donning one of the Forty Thieves' dresses. This compelled me to go around speaking to every one so disguised, and to my satisfaction, by their voices, I discovered my man and also Mr. Barnes. In the final tableau, Mr. Barnes, who evidently was watching Ali Baba, attempted to get near him, and by chance was immediately behind my man. Fearing that he would interfere with my plans, I fell in just behind him. My design was to tempt the fellow to steal the ruby, which, if he did, would satisfy at least myself that my suspicions were correct. It was, perhaps, a mad scheme, but it suc-

ceeded. I had so arranged that every one should pass the Sultan and make obeisance. In doing this, as my *fiancée* was seated on the floor, the ruby in her hair would be just at hand, and one who knew its high value could easily take it. I fully expected my man to do this, and I saw him gently withdraw it. Immediately Mr. Barnes stepped forward to seize him, but I held the detective from behind, then threw him into the advancing crowd, and, in the confusion, escaped from the house."

Mr. Mitchel paused, and silence prevailed. All felt, rather than knew, that a tragedy might be at hand. Mr. Thauret however, in a moment said :

"Are you not going to tell us the name of this sneak thief ?"

"No," quickly responded Mr. Mitchel. "But you are wrong to call my suspect a sneak thief. If crime were a recognized business, as gambling in Wall Street is now considered, this man would be counted 'a bold operator.' I confess that I admire him for his courage. But it would scarcely do for me to mention his name, when I am not in the position to prove that he is the guilty man."

"I thought you said that you saw him steal the ruby ?" said Mr. Thauret.

"I did, but as I myself had been suspected of that, my unsupported word would be inadequate. Let me tell you what I have done in the matter since. The most important step for me, perhaps, was to prevent the sale of the gem. This was not difficult, as it is known the world over. I warned all dealers, and let my man know that I

had done so. Next, I wished to delay a *dénouément* until to-night, the time when my wager with Mr. Randolph would be settled. I soon discovered that my suspect would not be averse to a marriage with a rich American girl. He questioned me adroitly as to the fortune which would come to my little sister-in-law, and I replied in such a way that I knew he would bend his energies in that direction. Then I did that, which, perhaps, I should not have done, but I felt myself master of the situation and able to control events. I made a wager with Dora that she would not remain unengaged until to-night, and I stipulated that should she have offers she should neither accept nor reject a suitor. I also told her, though I declined to fully explain how, that she would materially assist me in winning my wager."

This explains what Dora meant when she asked Mr. Randolph if money would count with him against her love. When she accepted the wager with Mr. Mitchel she had been feeling resentfully towards Mr. Randolph, who, as long as he suspected his friend of the graver crimes, hesitated to become connected with him by marriage. This made him less attentive to Dora, so that she had not thought of him as a suitor when making the bet. When he declared himself she recognized her predicament and was correspondingly troubled, yet determined to win, and so acted as related.

By this time, though Mr. Mitchel had not mentioned the name of the criminal, several present knew to whom he was alluding. Mr. Randolph said impetuously:

"Then that explains—— " here he stopped, confused.

"Yes," said Mr. Mitchel, smiling, "that explains everything that has perplexed you. Be reconciled for the time you have been made to wait, for you will now not only win the lady, but you will recover this check, for I must pass it over to her as a forfeit. Gentlemen, shall we drink to the health and success of Mr. Randolph ?"

This was done in silence. The guests felt a constraint. They knew that more was yet to come and anxiously waited for it.

Mr. Mitchel continued: "Gentlemen, that ends my story, except that I engaged Mr. Barnes to take up the threads of evidence which I gave him, and to disentangle them if he could. Shall we hear his report ?"

CHAPTER XVIII.

MR. BARNES'S NARRATIVE.

"GENTLEMEN," began Mr. Barnes, rising, "I am only an ordinary man, following a profession at which some are disposed to sneer, but which to me seems but the plain duty of one who is endowed with the peculiar qualities that are essential to the calling. Our host would make a magnificent detective, but I suppose he feels that he has a higher duty to perform. Begging you then to forgive my manner of addressing you, being by no means a speaker, I will tell you the little that I have done, prefacing my remarks by saying that without the valuable assistance of Mr. Mitchel I should have been powerless.

There was a curious button which I found in the room where the murder was committed, and which matched a set owned by Mr. Mitchel so closely, that it seemed to me to point to him as one who had a guilty knowledge. I spent much time following the clues that turned up in that connection, all of which however was not entirely misspent, for I discovered the true name of the dead woman to be Rose Montalbon, and that aided me greatly in my later work. At last, then, I abandoned the idea that Mr. Mitchel was guilty and frankly admitted this. He then told me the name of the jewelry firm from which

the buttons had been ordered, and I went across the Atlantic.

"The button which I had was imperfect. This was my starting-point. Through letters of introduction which Mr. Mitchel gave me, I succeeded in obtaining the assistance of the jewellers. They gave me the name of the man who had carved the cameos for them, but they knew nothing of the imperfect button. They had also lost track of the cameo-cutter. It took me over a month to trace that man, even with the aid of the Paris police. Finally I found him, and he told me that he had sold the button to a friend. This friend I found after some delay, and he admitted that he had once had the button, but that he had given it to a woman. More time was lost in discovering this woman, but when I did she too recognized the button and said that it had been stolen from her by another woman, whom she described as a Creole. Thus at last I got on the track of the Montalbon, for that was the name which she used in France. Under this name it was easier to follow her. I soon learned that she had a companion, by the name of Jean Molitaire. I then easily found that Molitaire had been in the employ of the Paris jewellers as shipping-clerk. It was he who had written the two descriptions of the jewels, one of which I found among the woman's effects, and the other in Mr. Mitchel's possession. This was a suspicious circumstance, but we know now how it was that the handwriting matched, a fact which had puzzled me greatly. It seems that Mr. Mitchel at one time had bought some valuable papers from the

Montalbon woman, paying her with diamonds, and recommending her to his Paris jewellers to dispose of them."

"That," said Mr. Mitchel, "was partly to get her out of this country, and partly to recover the diamonds, which I did, through the dealer."

"So he told me. It was when she received the money from them that she noticed Molitaire. It was not long after that the second set of jewels were sold to Mr. Mitchel. This clerk of course knew of the transaction, because he packed them for shipment. Then he must have persuaded the woman to accompany him across the Atlantic, with the design of stealing the gems from Mr. Mitchel, as soon as he should take them from the custom-house. This is seen from the fact that three days after the shipment this man resigned his position, and from that time all trace of both the man and the woman in Paris is lost."

"From which you deduce that they followed the jewels?" said Mr. Mitchel.

"Of course. The man and woman separated here to avoid suspicion. By a trick the woman obtained possession of apartments in the very house where your intended lived, whilst Molitaire stopped at the Hoffman, which of course is very near your own hotel. As soon as you went to Boston they followed and registered at the same hotel. You obtained the jewels from the custom-house, and they entered your room and robbed you during your absence. Your theory of the murderer's actions after the jewels were recovered by you, is probably correct. He

went back to hunt for them, hoping that she had not placed them in the satchel, or rather that she had taken them out of it, since you yourself placed them there. I think there is no point left unexplained.

"Pardon me," said Mr. Thauret, "I think you are wrong. You have not to my mind quite connected this man—what did you call him? Jean Molitaire, was it not? Well, I do not see that you have traced his hand to the crime."

"I think that I have," said Mr. Barnes.

"You do not make it clear to me," said Mr. Thauret, as coolly as though discussing some question in which he had but a passing interest. "You say that your Montalbon woman noticed this Molitaire when she sold her diamonds. Later that both were missing from Paris. The woman turned up in New York, but how do you prove that Molitaire did not go to—let us say Russia?"

"No," said Mr. Barnes," he did not go to Russia. Suppose that I should tell you that I ferreted out the fact that this name Molitaire was but an alias, and that the man's true name was Montalbon? Then when we remember that the woman's name had been cut from all her garments is that not significant?"

This speech made a mild sensation, but Mr. Thauret remained unmoved. He replied calmly:

"All things are significant—how do you interpret this fact, supposing that you could prove it?"

"This Molitaire was really the dead woman's husband. They quarrelled many years ago, and she went to New

Orleans where she kept a gambling-house, having learned the trade from him. When they met again in Paris she recognized him. Then when the fellow conceived the idea of following the jewels, it suited his purpose to affect a reconciliation so that he might use the woman as a tool. After the murder it would be to his interest to hide the name of Montalbon by cutting out the marks on the woman's clothing."

"Pardon my pursuing the argument," said Mr. Thauret, "but I find it entertaining. You surprise me, Mr. Barnes, at the ready way in which you read men's actions. Only, are you sure you are right? Suppose for instance that the woman had cut out the marks herself long before, at some time, when she was using an alias, then your fact would lose some of its significance, would it not? Circumstantial evidence is so difficult to read, you see! Then having lost that link, where do you prove Molitaire or Montalbon guilty? Being the woman's husband is no crime in itself."

"No," said Mr. Barnes, deciding that the time had come for an end of the controversy. "Being the woman's husband does not count in itself. But when I procure in Paris the photograph of Molitaire, left by accident in his room at his lodgings, and when I recognize that as the same man whom Mr. Mitchel suspected and trapped into stealing the ruby; and when upon my return to New York, I find that ruby upon that very man, and recover it, then we have some facts that do count."

"You recovered the ruby?" said Mr. Mitchel, amazed.

"Here it is," said Mr. Barnes, handing it to Mr. Mitchel. Mr. Thauret bit his lip, and by a strong endeavor retained his self-control.

"Mr. Barnes," said Mr. Mitchel, "I am sorry to disappoint you, but this is not my ruby."

"Are you sure?" asked the detective, with a twinkle in his eye.

"Yes, though you deserve credit, for, though not the ruby, it is the stolen stone. I have a complete set of duplicates of my jewels, and in making my little experiment I did not care to bait my trap with so valuable a gem. I therefore used the duplicate, which is this. But how have you recovered it?"

"I have been in New York for several days. I have devoted myself during that time to a personal watch upon Montalbon. Yesterday, to my surprise, he went to Police Head-quarters and begged for a permit to inspect the stolen jewels, saying that through them he might throw some light upon the mystery. His request was granted. Suspecting treachery I subsequently obtained a similar permit, and investigation with the aid of an expert showed that the bold scoundrel had handled the jewels, and so managed to change the imitation stone which he stole at the festival for the real one in the set which figured in the train robbery."

"By Jove," said Mr. Mitchel, "he is an artist. Then

I am indebted to you after all for recovering the stone, but tell us, how did you accomplish it?"

"I overheard Montalbon once say that a wise thief would keep a stolen article upon his person so that it could not be discovered without his knowledge. Therefore I felt certain that he would himself adopt this method. When the conversation this evening reached a point where it was evident that all would be disclosed, the man, who is present, dropped the ruby into his glass of Burgundy, where it would be out of sight and easily recovered, or swallowed. Later he attempted to dispose of it in this way, but I quickly drank his glass of wine, the ruby thus passing into my mouth. And now Mr. Montalbon, I arrest you in the name of the law," saying which, the detective put his hand upon Mr. Thauret's arm. The other guests jumped up, excited and expecting a scene. To the astonishment of all, Thauret remained quiet for a few moments, and then speaking slowly and distinctly, said :

"Gentlemen, we have heard several stories here tonight, will you listen to mine, and suspend judgment for a few moments?"

"We will hear you," said Mr. Mitchel, marvelling at the man's nerve. The others resumed their seats, all except the detective, who stood just back of his prisoner.

"I will trouble you to fill my glass," said Thauret to the waiter, and after being served, he coolly sipped a mouthful.

"I shall not bore you with a lengthy recital," he began, "I shall simply make a statement. Society, the civilized society of to-day, frowns upon and punishes what it terms 'the criminal class.' Yet how many have ever examined into the existing state of things, and analyzed the causes which make the criminal a possibility? The life of such a man is not so inviting that one would adopt it from choice, one I mean who had moral instincts. With the naturally immoral it would be otherwise, of course. But if one be born immoral, who is to blame? The individual himself, or the antecedents, including both parentage and circumstances? We pity the man who is congenitally tainted with disease, and we condemn that other man who is tainted in morals, though his condition is analagous and traceable to similar causes. Such a man I am. I confess that I am, and always have been a criminal, at least in the sense of acquiring money by what are termed illegitimate methods. But you will say, Mr. Barnes," turning for a moment to the detective, and thus whilst speaking to him, attracting his attention, so that unnoticed he dropped a small white pellet into his glass of wine, "that I worked for the jewelry house. Well, whatever I am, I have aimed to be artistic, as Mr. Mitchel admitted of me a few moments ago. By seeming to earn an honest living, I blinded the keen eyes of the Paris police, so that though many suspicions have been cast in my direction, conviction has always been impossible. So now, whilst pretending to explain to you

all, I have explained nothing. I simply designed to prevent conviction of the crimes charged against me, as I do, thus."

With a swift movement he drained his wine-glass, though Mr. Barnes attempted to prevent him. In ten minutes he was dead.

THE END.

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